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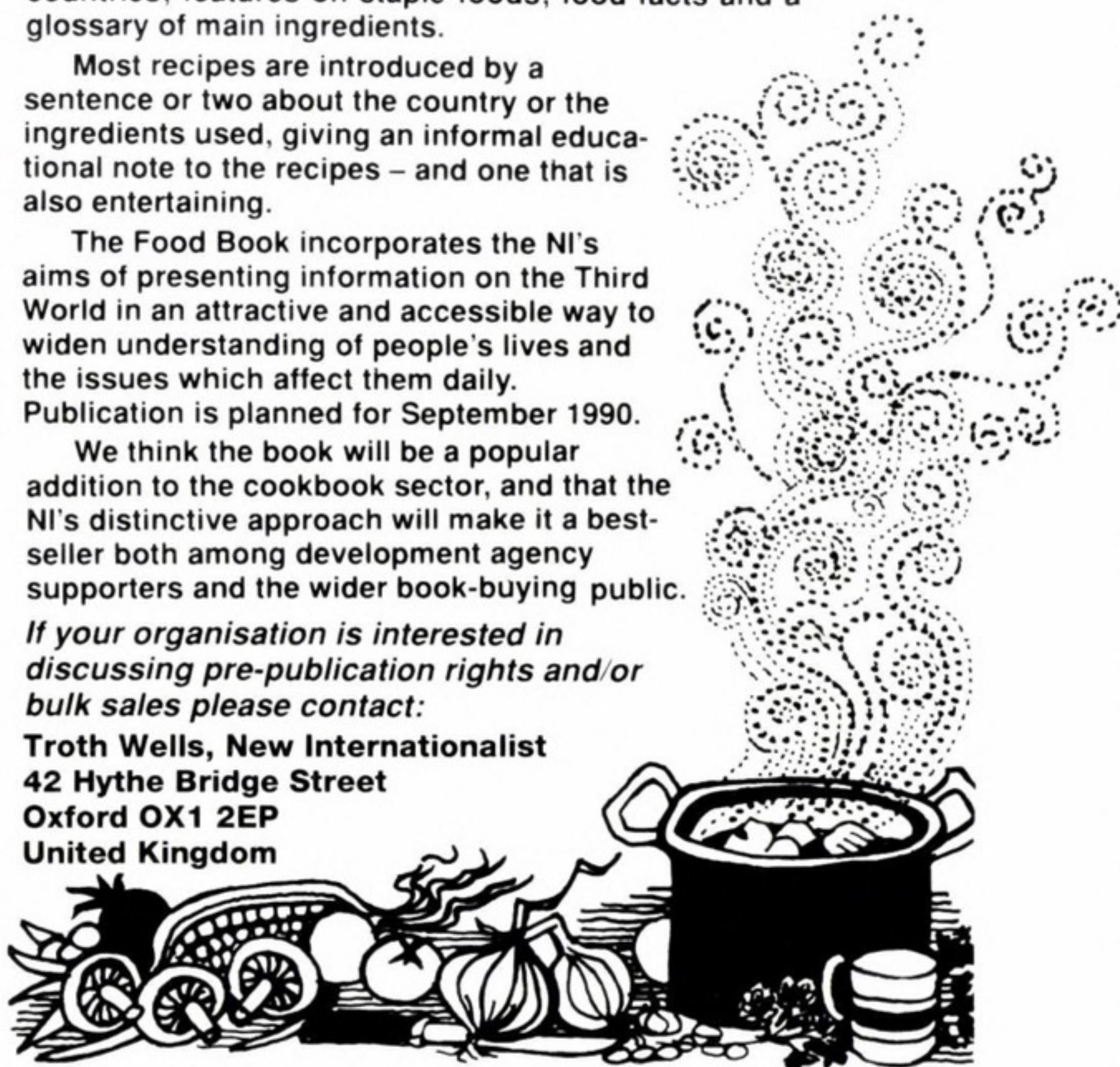
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ISSN 0305 9529

New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

The NI magazine is edited, produced and sold by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is co-operatively run by:

Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Wayne Ellwood, Alan Hughes, Guy Montgomery, Gill Moore, Clive Offley, James Rowland, Sue Shaw, Wendy Slack, Peter Stalker, Kate Stott, Richard Swift, Dexter Tiranti and Troth Wells.

Editorial responsibility rests with the co-operative whose purpose is to communicate development ideals through print and film to the widest possible audience.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

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UK: 120-126 Lavender Ave, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP. Tel. (01) 685 0372.

Individuals £18.40 p.a.; £5.40 qtlly.

Institutions £35 p.a.

Canada: 1057 McNicoll Ave, Suite 108, Scarborough, Ontario M1W 3W6. Tel. (416) 496 8413.

Individuals 1 yr – \$30; 2 yrs – \$52; 3 yrs – \$74.

Overseas (by air) – \$45 p.a. Institutions \$50 p.a.

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Aotearoa/NZ: PO Box 1905, Christchurch.

Individuals \$34; Institutions \$39 (includes GST).

Rest of the World: 120 – 126 Lavender Ave, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP. Tel. (01) 685 0372.

Individuals £22; Institutions £40. Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or Bankers Draft.

Despatch by air only.

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES

UK: 42 Hythe Bridge St., Oxford OX1 2EP. Tel. (0865) 728181. Fax. (0865) 793152.

Canada: 175 Carlton St., Toronto, Ontario M5A 2K3. Tel. (416) 923 9857.

Australia: PO Box 82, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065. Tel. (03) 419 7111.

MAILINGS

Occasionally we agree to exchange our subscribers' names with organizations whose aims are broadly in line with our own. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office. Cover and UK inside pages printed by Andover Press Ltd., Andover, Hampshire.

North American inside pages printed in Canada by Webcom, Scarborough, Ontario.

The NI is distributed to the UK news trade by AGB Impress., 22-26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Tel. (01) 253 3456. Fax. (01) 608 0726. Telex. 261270.

The NI in North America (USPS 329-770) is published monthly by New Internationalist Publications, 175 Carlton Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5A 2K3.

US 2nd class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. US Postmaster send address changes to: The NI, P O Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. US Office of Publication, Lewiston, NY 14092. Registered with Alternative Press Index.

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Stories include:

● Inside a 'Little Tiger' — Hyundai in South Korea. ● How, long ago, a schoolteacher beat a millionaire stockbroker to the 'Law of Comparative Advantage' and told her students all about it. ● Two Faces of Trade: Cocoa and Carburettors. ● Raw Materialism and the Poisoned Windfall. ● Brazil — the world in microcosm.



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For membership details and for details of our 'Green Index' write to: **Alan Phillips,**
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P O Box 197,
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For telephone information call:
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EVENTS TO WATCH OUT FOR



RSGB Ecology Group

Green Fair on Sunday 28 January from 2 – 6pm at The Steinberg Centre for Judaism, 80 East Road, Finchley, London N3 2FY



Questioning Development

A series of events organised by International Voluntary Service and Development and Exchange Programme. Saturday and/or Sunday 27/28 January events are taking place in London on the subject of Refugees and Newcastle on Youth around the world. Contact: **IVS-DEEP on 091-261 1649**



'The Beduin of Negar' by Penny Maddrell will be published by the Minority Rights Group on Monday 22 January. Copies £3 inc. p&p. A3 poster £1.50. Contact: **Minority Rights Group, 379 Brixton Road, London SW9.**



Conference on Palestinian Human Rights

on Saturday 3 February at the Royal Commonwealth Society, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2, 10.30 – 4.30. Speakers include eye witnesses from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, prisoners, deportees, human rights representatives and trade unionists. Contact: **Arab Studies Society on 01-724 7201**



25 years of Fair Trade

In March, Oxfam Trading will be celebrating 25 years of its Bridge scheme, linking craft producers in developing countries with UK customers. If you would like to visit their premises in Bicester, Oxon and see for yourself the crafts as they arrive, then contact: **Caroline Lucas on (0865) 56777**

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'OH wonderful,' cried a friend when I mentioned that I was doing this issue on green consumerism. 'You can tell me what to buy.' He began weighing up the pros and cons of a long and detailed list of 'green' products which now adorn our supermarket shelves. 'Which ones should I get?' he concluded disarmingly.

I took a deep breath. Few simple questions have easy answers. And his was no exception.

Nobody wants clear-cut solutions more than a hard-pressed editor whose job is to condense complex material into limited space. The 'on-the-one-hand, on-the-other-hand' approach is the ultimate frustration when you simply want a 'yes' or 'no'.

How could I best help my friend? This question beset the whole issue. **NI** has readers in at least five countries; the magazine had to offer something useful to all. And this when there are no simple answers because there are no perfect

'green' products – yet.

A few months ago I might have despaired. But at **NI** you get used to taking on (apparently) impossible tasks. Editors stride around the office and airily announce 'I shall be writing my history of the world this month' or 'I'm summarizing the global economy tomorrow'. No obstacle is too great, no self-confidence too small. Our arrogance or irreverence – depending on your point of view – at least has the advantage of producing something succinct. So I went home and asked myself: 'What would be most useful?'

There are books around now, and some magazines, which give fairly detailed analyses of the best buys for green consumers. These publications sell well. But I didn't see anyone poring over them as they pushed their trolleys around my local supermarket. And a comprehensive shopping guide which attempted to span three continents in 23 pages might have seemed ... a little thin?

I opted for something that I thought would be both more manageable and more useful – something readers wouldn't have to lug around to the shops because it would implant itself firmly in their minds. What follows is a set of guiding principles to assess the proliferating 'green' brand

names and some practical suggestions as to action we can all take to save our planet.

This was not unproblematic either. What do time-hungry working parents do to keep their infant clean, without disposable diapers? And is there a satisfactory way to dispose of waste? Perhaps you feel that the whole process of greening your lifestyle is exhausting enough without the **NI** making more complications. Or maybe you have ideas we never thought of, in which case why not write in and share them?

It would be wonderful if there was one Supergreen solution we could all buy into and stop worrying. But the way ahead often seems as clear as mud. This issue has tried at every turn to make the path a little clearer. But it never claims that the answers are easy. None of them are.

Sue Shaw

Sue Shaw
for the New Internationalist co-operative

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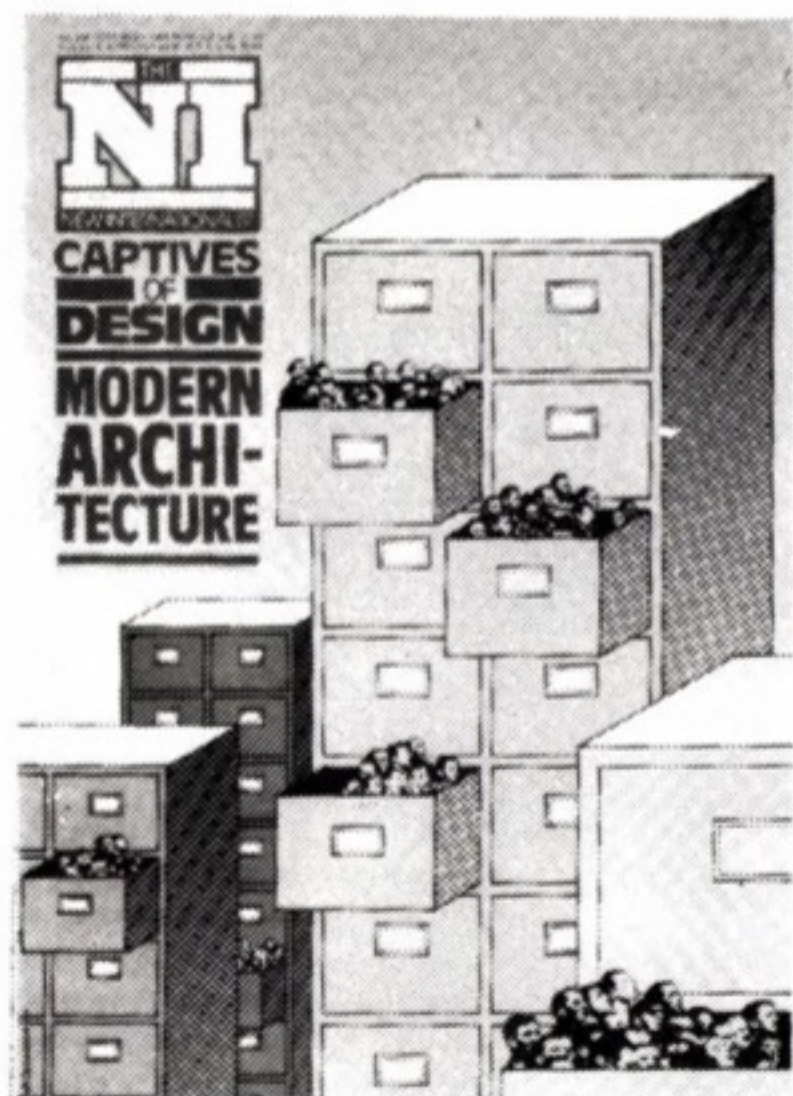
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Back to the imperial era

I read your issue on *architecture* (NI 202) with dismay. To prescribe beauty and decide what people should and should not like about where they live smacks of arrogance and elitism. You do not con-



sider the possibility that some people may actually enjoy the view from atop a highrise.

It is simple-minded to assert that everyone can or should be involved in the complexities of designing universities or opera houses. Your tendency to romanticize the vernacular belongs to the imperial era of glorifying 'the noble savage' while stealing his/her land. How many shantytowns of the Third World would not cherish one of those suburban bungalows you so despise?

Seymour Jackson
Ontario, Canada

Shocked response

I was horrified to read that Bishop John Shelby Spong has received death threats because he supports committed monogamous relationships between gay and lesbian people (*Homosexuality* NI 201). I am a Christian and cannot agree with what John wrote in his article *Sodom revisited*. But it saddens me that people could send death threats because they don't agree with something. Where is the Christian love that Jesus talked about? People who write things like that make themselves as bad as the thing they attack.

Peter Hughes
Merseyside, UK

NI welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Elitist posture

Dexter Tiranti's meeting with the New Zealand customs officer (NI 200) should have taught him not to make assumptions about people. He might then have thought twice about his ridiculous and insulting implication that readers of the 'gutter press' and 'popular newspapers' are not concerned about the state of the world.

You may like to consider the fact that readers of the popular press contributed millions to BandAid, SportAid, Comic Relief etc; have taken solidarity action in support of trade unionists in South Africa and Namibia; are informed about workers' conditions in the equivalent industries to their own in the Far East and so on.

Come on NI, stop your elitist posturing and question the quality of your coverage. Just because the Guardian hasn't got tits and bums on every page doesn't mean it isn't sexist.

Jane Foxworthy
Leicester, UK

Happy birthday

May I extend my heartiest congratulations to Dexter Tiranti, Lesley and Peter Adamson, Troth Wells and the whole NI team on reaching the 200th issue. Please do not be concerned about measuring how much NI has done over the years; it is not easy to quantify the awareness, understanding and other benefits your publication has

brought to the children of the Third World. Magazines like NI do change public opinion, though it may take a long, long time.

Dr S Hameed
Kent, UK

Painful cuts

I read your article *Two Decades in the Life of the World* (NI 200) with both pleasure – because it is well written – and despair, because development has been thrown into reverse. It is very hard convincing powers like the World Bank to adopt policies that truly help the poorest. And the recent World Bank and IMF meetings did not sound encouraging for the most indebted nations who are constantly forced to make cuts where it hurts most: health, education and food subsidies. If these institutions genuinely want to help the poor, they should give priority to helping voluntary organizations. It is also time to insist on a borrower having a good track record in ending hunger in their own country, before they get money.

Jessica von Boeventer
Wiltshire, UK

Silly joke

Re the 'Enaye Islands' (NI 200) – who are you kidding? These islands do not exist! I searched loads of encyclopedias, gazetteers etc. No mention of the 'Enaye Islands'. I even searched the Cambridge Encyclopaedias of Languages

for a mention of the 'Enaye' language. Zilch! And then it struck me. 'Enaye' – pronounced NI. The signature at the bottom, clinched it: Jane Doe – which is a synonym for The-Woman-in-the-Street.

How could you do this to me? I look to NI for factual, thought-provoking journalism, not April Fool's Day articles. And while you are about it, please drop that stupid name Aotearoa for New Zealand. The whole world apart from a handful of Maoris know it as New Zealand ... are you trying to con a few subscriptions from them?

Frank Halls
Dandenong, Australia

Editor: The UN has been advised by the New Zealand Government that 'Aotearoa' may now be used interchangeably with 'New Zealand'.

Fortress right

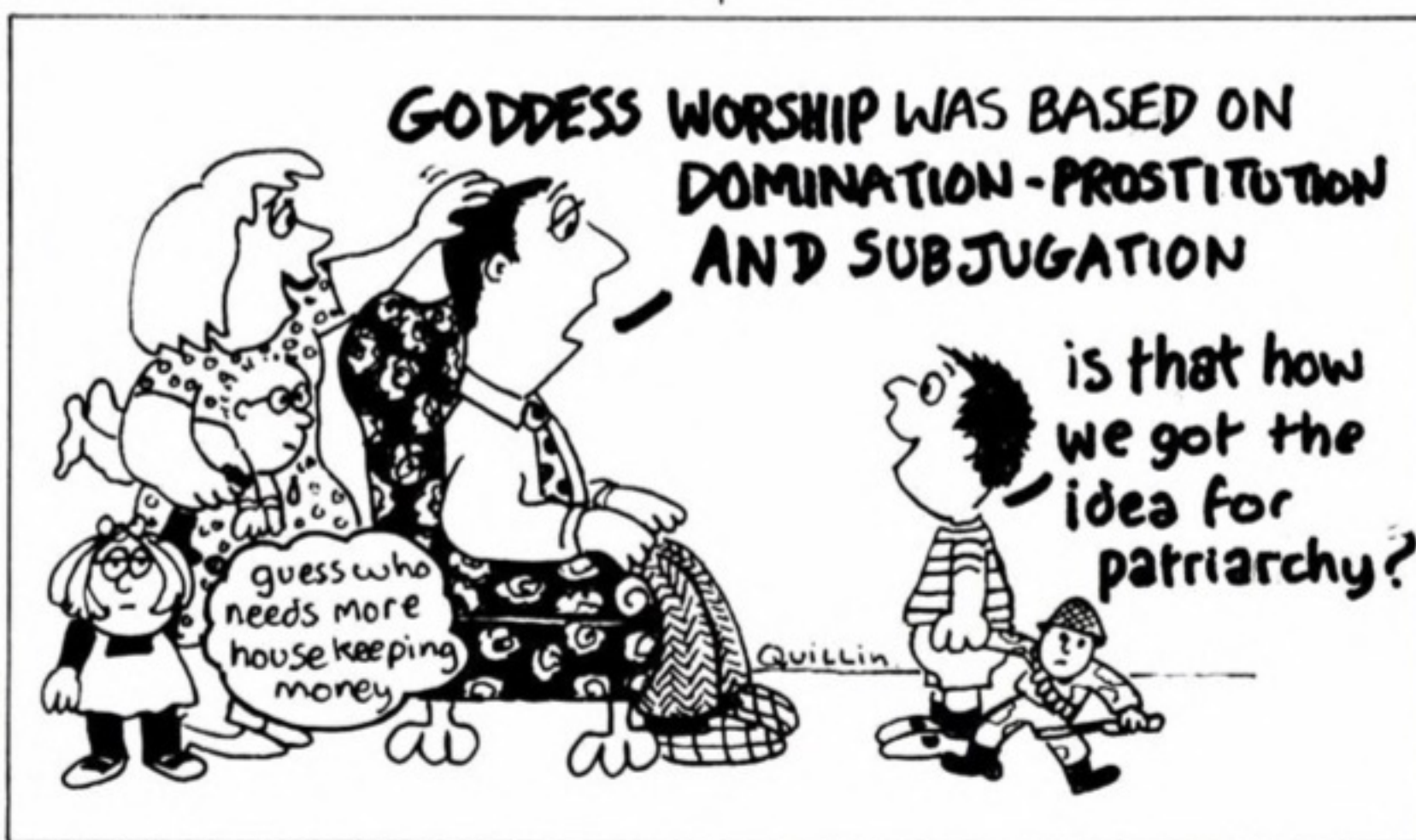
In *The Palestine/Israel conflict* (NI 199), Ms Shaw refers to 'Israel's fortress mentality'. She should understand that every country in the world has an incontrovertible right to a 'fortress mentality' and every country has been historically allowed the right to keep its borders intact and protect its people from invasion by hostile forces. She should recall that Arabs were very aggressive towards Israel, refusing to admit the possibility of a Jewish State in the Middle East. And she should also remember Israel's small size.

B Davenport
London, UK

Delinquent goddess

Goddess worship (*History of the World* NI 196) is primarily suitable for extreme feminists who want to dominate men. The stories about these goddesses show that they are not beneficent; they are mostly older females who choose young men – sometimes even their own sons – as lovers to be kept in subjugation. Goddess worship is associated with human sacrifice, prostitution, castration and sexual orgies – it should not be recommended.

Marion Laring
Isle of Wight, UK



Noble struggle

Richard Swift's comments in your *Cancer* issue (NI 198) are insightful and empowering. Shortly before reading the magazine, I watched a TV commentary criticizing terms like 'AIDS patient' or 'AIDS victim'. Expressions like 'people living with AIDS' are preferable. The word 'patient' does not describe a person; it describes a relationship with a doctor. My mother developed Hodgkin's Disease in 1968 and was told she had three months to live. She's alive to this day and has been in full remission for years. People living with cancer, people living with AIDS, people living in today's world all face struggles. And some aspect of struggle is always ennobling.

Barrie Zwicker
Toronto, Canada

Insensitive treatment

Your article *Ten ways to get cancer* (Cancer NI 198) was insensitive and implied that the responsibility for getting the illness lies solely with the individual. To suggest that individuals 'deserve' or choose to get cancer through their actions is absurd and wrong. As someone bereaved through the disease, I felt angry and upset by the flippancy with which you dealt with this subject.

Louise Kilbride
Birmingham, UK

Religious challenge

We have noticed certain errors concerning Islam in the *History of the World* (NI 196). It was stated that Islam was based on the worship of

a 'Father God'. This is totally unfounded. The God that Muslims worship is free from any 'creaturely' attributes and in fact the Arabic term 'Allah' possesses neither gender nor plural. Moreover, the presence of an image of the 'Great Goddess' on the Black Stone in the Kaaba is certainly a myth. It is difficult to believe that a religion so strongly anti-idolatry would allow such an image to exist in the holiest of shrines.

R Ali Bhai, General Secretary
Islamic Information Bureau
London, UK

Chris Brazier writes: Many Muslim readers have written in to protest at the idea that the Black Stone carries a pagan image. My source material seems to have been wrong and I apologize for any offence caused.

Workers unite

The concluding discussion on historical inevitability in *The*

History of the World (NI 196) wants much stronger resolve. It should have stressed – as Marx does – the importance of workers everywhere gaining complete control of production as the way out of their historical tyrannies. When this happens – as one day it must – the 'industrial railroad track' will be altered. Workers will realize that they share a common interest. They will no longer be divided. A 'new direction' will be achieved as Marx predicted when he wrote that workers of the world must unite.

Don Abbott
Newfoundland, Canada



The views expressed on the letters pages are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER FROM LA PAZ

Trashing lives

At night on the city rubbish tip in La Paz, strange things start to happen. Susanna Rance reports.

LITTLE Amaru looked down at the street and kicked a can with his red gumboots. 'We're near home, aren't we?' he concluded. 'Yes, love, how do you know?' his dad replied. 'Because there's rubbish. That's life isn't it, Papi?'

The rubbish tip has been part of the scene since we moved to our market street seven years ago. By day it is invisible: only a layer of dust remains on the stretch of pavement where vendors sit selling fruit, vegetables and spicy food. Passers-by pause here to admire the spectacular view over shanty-town rooftops, across the crater-like basin of the city to the Andean ranges on the other side. Above them towers the snow-capped Mount Illimani, symbol and guardian of La Paz.

As night falls, the scene changes. The encroaching dark is a signal for people to emerge from nearby houses with boxes and bins to dump their trash. At first a discreet pile, the mound grows steadily until it covers the pavement almost knee-deep for 20 yards.

Then the scavengers move in. Flames flicker as they set light to the rubbish — not to reduce it to ashes but to see what is worth collecting. Poking around with sticks, they hold up promising finds to examine them, while eerie shadows move between the fires on the black tip.

Among the regulars at our dump are a pack of stray dogs, rooting around for bones and scraps. They compete with neighbours gleaning left-overs for their rabbits, sheep and pigs. Another group combs the refuse for tins, bottles and plastic containers to be sold on junk stalls.

Then come the children for whom the nightly forage produces not only improvised toys but anything which can conceivably be sold to raise a bit of cash. Some are street kids who rely on their ingenuity to keep alive. They take their night's work seriously and do the rounds of local houses, carting bundles of trash to the tip for a few pennies, and getting first pick of each load.

David, aged nine, empties our bin in the yard to pick out the salvageable items before he crams the rest into a sack to take to the dump. 'I can sell these in the Sunday market for 50 pence,' he says,

carefully setting aside a bundle of Time magazines. A bottomless dustbin, a plastic oil container and a private selection of empty bottles have already been added to his private junk heap, waiting to be collected one day when he has time.

To some the rubbish tip is an eyesore. To others it means a chance to recycle whatever may still have a shred of use. Nothing is wasted and only the dregs are left, charred and thoroughly sifted, by the time the municipal refuse truck comes through at dawn the next day.

In La Paz, social status is marked by altitude, with the well-to-do preferring the balmy climate at the bottom of the city basin. Down there, trash is discreetly disposed of by aproned maids who run out with bins when the municipal truck comes by. The best-class rubbish is found at the gates of high-walled mansions, their privacy protected by barking German Shepherd dogs and uniformed guards.

Up at the top of the city, the refuse trucks are nowhere in sight. Dumps form haphazardly, filling crevices in the eroded landscape, littering wasteland and clogging streams. Kids play on the tips amidst swarms of flies.

One organisation of shanty-town women, concerned about the risk to their children's health, did a survey to find out where dumps were located and what they consisted of. The results were disconcerting: many tips were only yards from schools and markets. And one of their main components was human excrement, since few houses have toilets in the poorer zones.

The women set up a project to make cheap, home-built latrines with local materials. While that took shape, they organised a massive dump-clearing campaign, with voluntary teams working in each zone. Pregnant women and grandmothers kept the children entertained with puppet shows at a safe distance from the tips, while others worked together to pile up, burn and bury the rubbish.

The Town Hall, afraid of bad publicity, sent a convoy of refuse trucks around the shanty towns the day before the campaign. But the task of clearing hundreds of tips was too much for them to take on at the last minute.

'We're living on top of a load of trash,' said community leader Nelida, shovel in hand, a handkerchief tied bandit-style over her face against the dirt, smoke and dust. 'We're getting contaminated and our kids are getting sick. We have to deal with the problem ourselves, until the authorities remember we exist.'

Susanna Rance is a writer and researcher who has lived in Bolivia for several years.



Space traveller Sue Shaw reports strange developments on Earth. Here is a transcript of her narration to the Fourth Inter-Galactic Council, made in the Age of Concern.

SHOPPING FOR THE PLANET THE GREEN CONSUMER



Photo : Denis Thorpe/The Guardian

FRIENDS and Councillors, my trip to Planet Earth confirms that the carelessness of a few generations could destroy that world. As you recall, I was despatched on this mission because ours is the only remaining planet in the Universe with intelligent life. Faced with our people's terror of enduring eternity alone, we are anxiously monitoring Earth lest it plunges into extinction like so many planets before. Here is my report.

My vessel arrived on Earth during Christmas – the festival of glut. This is the biggest religious celebration in the wealthy zones. Anthems blare, lights flash, currency is outlaid and packages are exchanged, transporting worshippers into paroxysms of pleasure. One Earth Child said to me 'I like to shop until I drop; stuff myself until I bust; drink myself under the table.'

This human is a slave to the primitive religion of 'more'. Like millions of others, she thrives on excess. It is the only god she knows.

Worshippers gaze reverently through temple windows, at offerings that adorn the altars to consumption: shiny shoes, gift-wrapped talcum powders, personal stereos, costumes and cars. When the spirit

moves them, they rush in to exchange.

Many dedicate their lives to worship. They harvest currency by toiling silently before flickering screens, pressing keys like rosaries, or by pushing papers ritually around office desks. The monthly pay-cheque is their ticket to salvation.

Ownership is all that many Believers understand. They seek life's meaning in possessions, and use inanimate objects to tell other Earthlets who they are. Strange

and costly garments branded *Gucci* or *Dior* are worn to signal that humans have judgement, style and personality. 'You are what you buy,' is a common hymn.

And when they tire of their offerings, Believers throw them away to replace them with 'better' things. Waste, for them, is an inevitable by-product of worship.

All over this world – in New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, London – Earthlets worship in the temples. Their religion keeps the inter-zonal economy growing. Consumption is demand; demand brings enterprisal growth; and growth provides the means for still more consumption.

The cycle is governed by a holy commandment: 'Thou shalt consume to thy maximum capacity, according to thy means and the artifacts available.' Humans have obeyed for generations – and in their millions. First they satisfied their individual material needs for food and shelter. Then they fulfilled needs fostered by each other. 'If my neighbour buys a car,' one typical consumer told me, 'I buy a bigger one. If she has a holiday, mine is more expensive. Whatever she has or does, I try to stay ahead.'

But the combined effect of this consumption for their private good, has dam-

aged the public interest. Breathing-gas is polluted. Fish are dying. The soil is impoverished. Individuals possess conveyances to go to the country. But the country is no longer fit to be enjoyed.

Fellow Councillors, this strange religion has smacked up against the limits of Earth's resources. The cult is destroying the very planet upon which it depends.

But Earth Children are also changing. They are realizing how small their world is – and that zonal actions have inter-zonal consequences.

This understanding has dawned slowly. First they discovered that an atom-smashing war would have catastrophic effects – like planetary winter and the death of terrestrial cultivation. Then humans inflicted a trail of environmental catastrophes on themselves from a leak at 'Bhopal' chemical factory on the V-shaped landmass, to a nuclear-power-plant explosion in 'Chernobyl' region. Two reforming priests helped the process of realization: Brandt publicly declared that the world's poorest hemisphere was being destroyed; while Brundtland associated poverty and planetary pollution with unbraked economic growth.

Earth Dwellers have now begun to grasp that they are tattering the ozone layer, which protects them from the harmful rays of their sun (star 4135 in our heavens). Some humans have prophesied a global temperature rise of around three degrees centigrade by the year 2030 as a result of atmospheric contamination – and Councillors you have to smell this pollution yourselves to believe it! Even Government high priests are uneasy.

Earthlets themselves have reacted variously. Non-believers have created their own 'Green' sects which argue for negative economic growth. But Believers as yet cannot praise this solution – though they have likewise despaired of waiting for political leaders to become planetary saviours. They have prayed for new ways to effect transformation and green consumerism has been revealed to them.

Green consumerism encourages humans to consume in ways kindly to



Worshippers gaze through temple windows at adornments on the altar to consumption.

their planet. It is an auspicious development, similar to the religious movement which marked the beginning of our own Green Age.

On Earth, progressive tabernacles called ethical investment schemes have been using currency to support social causes for some time. And recently the radical sect Friends of the Earth campaigned against squirters or 'aerosols' containing ozone-damaging CFC gases by persuading Believers to use CFC-free artifacts. Many big enterprisals agreed to stop making the offending items.

This gave Believers hope that things could change. They started buying artifacts that they saw as environmentally benign – with remarkable effect. For example, the McDonald's pantheon was forced to stop using CFCs in fast-food receptacles as a result of the threatened boycott of Big Mac flesh-burgers.¹ Even supermarket pantheons commenced going green. Ordinary Earth Dwellers are discovering that they can control what happens to their planet.

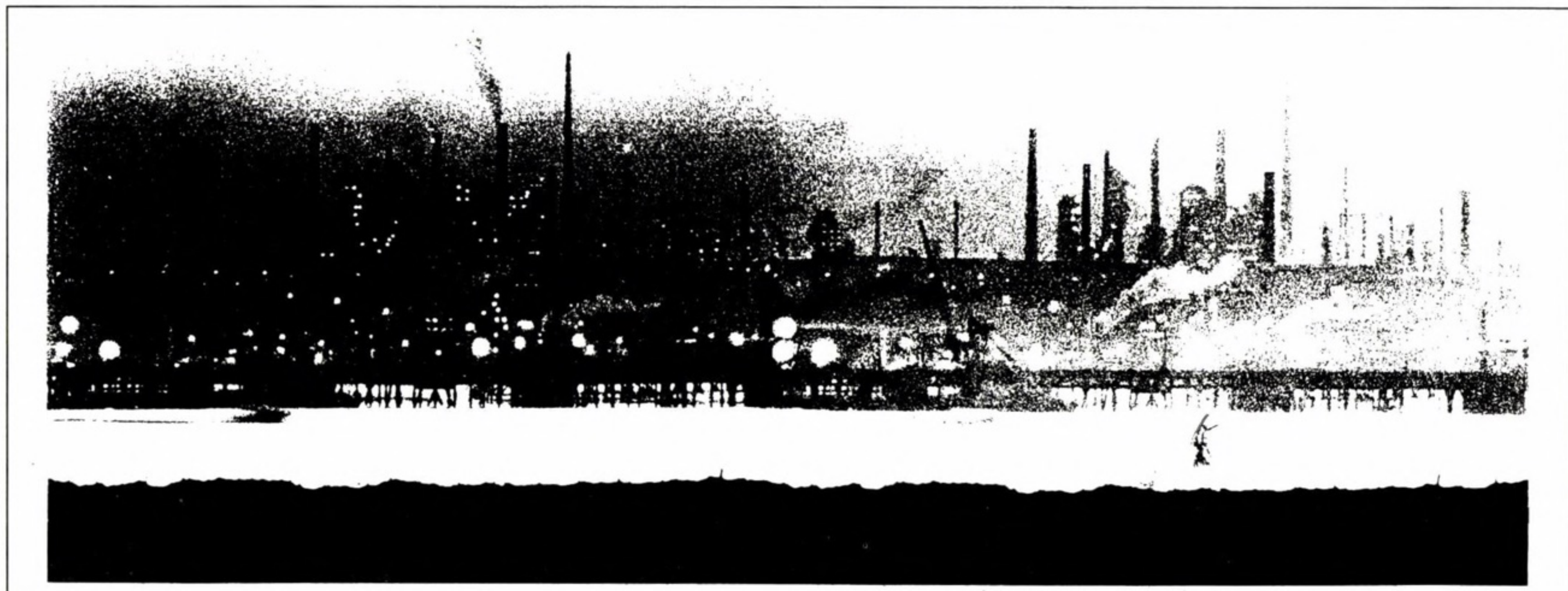
Today 'Green' temples are sprouting everywhere. 'The Body Shop', which makes and vends environmentally-friendly beautifiers, has proved astonishingly successful. From a single small temple

opened in 1976, it now operates in 33 zones. Oracles set up to confer green rites on business-priests are booming.

Worshippers are demanding environmentally-friendly artifacts. In Zone 'UK', 67 per cent of humans are willing to exchange more currency for such objects.² Earthlets in Zone 'Canada' exchange up to 10 per cent more for 'green' goods.³ And suddenly the temples of consumption are proliferating 'green' offerings; green batteries, green cleaning-fluid, green fuel. Even 'sweets' – a mild drug which induces a brief taste-high but damages the body – sport the verdant claim.

Traditional consumption could soon become socially unacceptable. Humans are on the road to accepting what they call the Gaia Principle, which sees Earth's living matter as one. They are moving towards an inter-zonal community based on environmental sustainability and respect for all. But the path is not assured.

Unscrupulous businesses are milking green consumers of their currency. Unsliced wholemeal bread which has not been expensively purified exchanges for more than its sliced white imitation. And low-alcohol beer – which incurs no duty – is more expensive than the real thing. The cost of organic fruit and vegetables is par-



ticularly inflated.⁴

The environmental panic is heaven for the high priests of advertising whose function it is to capitalize on fears and desires. They are multiplying phrases like 'environment-friendly' and 'phosphate-free', to obscure the real 'greenness' of an artifact and confuse humans into exchanging more.

They are helped in this by the lack of language controls to describe offerings. 'Free-range' can refer to animals kept in barns which are even more crowded than battery cages. And 'ozone-friendly' often designates soft CFC gases which, though less destructive than others, still destroy. Parents are even offered 'environment-friendly' disposable bottom-wrappers for their sproglots.

And some high priests have told falsehoods. The BP multi-zonal company initially affirmed that its 'supergreen' unleaded petrol did not foul the environment – even though all such fuel produces nitrous oxide, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. Similarly the Shell enterprisal spawns glossy scriptures about community environmental projects that it will fund, while manufacturing some of the Planet's most treacherous chemicals.⁴

New gospels have appeared instructing humans how to 'go green' in style. These depict foppish dwellings, tastefully furnished in plain wood and provisioned with all kinds of 'environmentally-friendly' gadgets. Commercial airfresheners bow to ionizers, as if raw breathing-gas is no longer good enough. Drinking water comes in bottles. Low-radiation televisions transcend the humble picture-box. And the old commandment remains unchanged – buy, buy, buy.

'Saving the planet' is being translated into a religion for Earth Children who can afford for it. The god of conspicuous consumption has been refashioned, and money-harvesters now worship *frugality with style*. Pleasure was what Believers sought in their old god; innocence and

naturalness are what they buy in the new. When Earthlets discovered they were devouring their planet, they repented. And penitence is buying green; buying green is their prayer for grace.

Old gods die hard, fellow Councillors, as I'm sure you recall. Yet there is hope. Believers have gluttoned on the god of excess and found it wanting. Some may be tempted by old dogmas, but most are identifying deeper hungers within themselves. From this hollowness green consumerism springs. My suggestion is this.

Earthlets are crossing the bridge we traversed in the Age of Darkness. They could get lost. I propose sending them a guider – a transcript of this report will mysteriously appear in a reputable Earthly magazine and will make the following recommendations.

Humans should demand that businesses guarantee them accurate information about green products. If Earth Children lobby and demonstrate; if they pray only at the tabernacles of the worthy, they will propel the high priests of consumerism towards Earth sustainability. Zonal governments should be compelled to decree controls on manufacturing enterprisals and make the polluters pay.

Earth's richer zones have erred by forcing others to pay for their religion. The poorest half of the planet has been drained to resource the god of conspicuous consumption. Now there is a danger that this 'poor world' will fall victim of the greening process.

For example, rich zones which long ago destroyed their own glorious estate, now claim the poor world's tropical kingdom as a legacy for all. They suggest that tropical forests be translated into zonal parks or exchanged for poor-world debts. Rarely do they investigate the needs and desires of the forest-dwellers themselves. Yet it is poverty which drives these poor worlders to hew their saplings. And this poverty needs correcting or greening will

translate into more domination.

Green Believers are now pressing the priests of rich-world industry to scan supply chains right down to their poor-world beginnings. This is quite correct and yet the preferences of green consumers are already impairing sales of poor-world wares like palm oil, coffee and sugar. And they could lay waste to that hemisphere's traffic in tropical lumber.⁵

There is only one remedy. Green Believers in the rich world will not save their planet unless they guarantee the sustainability of poor-world economies: rich-world money must pay for poor-world industry to go green. Old temples must be cleaned and green ones opened. The poor world has great potential in this respect, including some 2,000 divisions of poisonous plants which might become pest killers. Green Believers should also support the chapels of fair trading which return profits to poor-world workers.

From our own experience, Inter-Galactic Councillors, we know that if Earthlings want to save their Planet they must realize their predicament is a global challenge. It can only be met if zonal governments connect through all-planetary councils. Green Believers must quicken these connections.

Green consumerism is a hopeful token of more substantial change. Earth's children are dawning – rather later than we did but perhaps not too late. And when their space-vessel reaches Pluto, they may hurry their Green Age even faster. I touched down on that planet during my homing, and all that remains of that great civilization, dear friends, are mountains of empty drink cans and a carpet of potato-chip packets. □

¹ This happened in the US in 1987. *Green Consumer Guide*, by Julia Hailes and John Elkington, (Victor Gollancz, 1988.)
² *The Sunday Correspondent*, 24 Sept, 1989. ³ *Canadian Consumer* No 2, 1989. ⁴ *Beyond Green Consumerism* by Sandy Irvine, (Friends of the Earth discussion paper 1, September 1989). ⁵ *South*, September, 1989.

Ideas for Action

INTERNATIONAL

International Organization of Consumers Unions, PO Box 1045, 10830 Penang, Malaysia. Tel 604 371396. **UNEP International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals**, Palais de Nations, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel 41 22 98 5400. **African NGOs Environment Network**, PO Box 53844, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel 26255 or 331019. **Environment Liaison Centre**, PO Box 72461, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel 24770 or 340849.

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Consumer's Institute (NZ), Private Bag TARO, Wellington 1. Tel 847963. **Environmental and Conservation Organizations of NZ Inc (ECO)**, PO Box 11057, Wellington. Tel 04 846 971. **Greenpeace**, Private Bag Wellesley St, Auckland. Tel 09 776 128. **Friends of the Earth**, PO Box 39065, Auckland West. Tel 09 3034319. **Forest and Bird Society**, PO Box 631, Wellington. Tel 04 728 154.

AUSTRALIA

State Pollution Control Commission, 157 Liverpool Street, Sydney, NSW 2000. Tel 02 265 8888. **Australia Consumers' Association**, 28 Queen Street, Chippendale, Sydney 2008, NSW. Tel 698 9200. **Friends of the Earth**, 56 Foster Street, Surry Hills 2000. Tel 02-211 3953. **NSW Environment Centre**, 176 Cumberland Street, Surry Hills 2000. Tel 02 27 4206. **Greening Australia**, 347 Riley Street, Surry Hills 2000. Tel 02 211 2155. **Australian Conservation Foundation**, 672B Glenferries Road, Hawthorn, 3122. **Greenpeace**, 134 Broadway, Sydney, 2000. Tel 02 211 0500.

CANADA

Consumer and Commercial Affairs, 1871 Smith Street, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P3V7. Tel 130 656 555000. **Consumer Protection Office**, 6 Rue de l'Université, Quebec, G1R 5G8. **Canadian Environmental Network**, PO Box 1289, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R3. **Pollution Probe**, 12 Madison Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M5R 2S1. **Saskatchewan Environmental Society**, Room 205, 219 22nd Street East, Saskatoon S7K 0G4.

UNITED KINGDOM

SustainAbility Ltd, 1 Cambridge Road, Barnes, London SW13 0PE Tel 01-243 1277. **Friends of the Earth**, 26–28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ Tel 01-490 1555. **Greenpeace**, 30-31 Islington Green, London N1 8XE Tel 01-354 5100. **Ark**, 498–500 Harrow Road, London W9 3QA Tel 01-968 6780. **Pesticide Trust**, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 Tel 01-354 3860. **Centre for Alternative Technology**, Machynlleth, Powys. Tel 0654 2400. **London Food Commission**, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR. Tel 01-253 9513. **Environmental Information Service**, PO Box 197, Cawston, Norfolk NR10 4BH Tel 0603 871048.

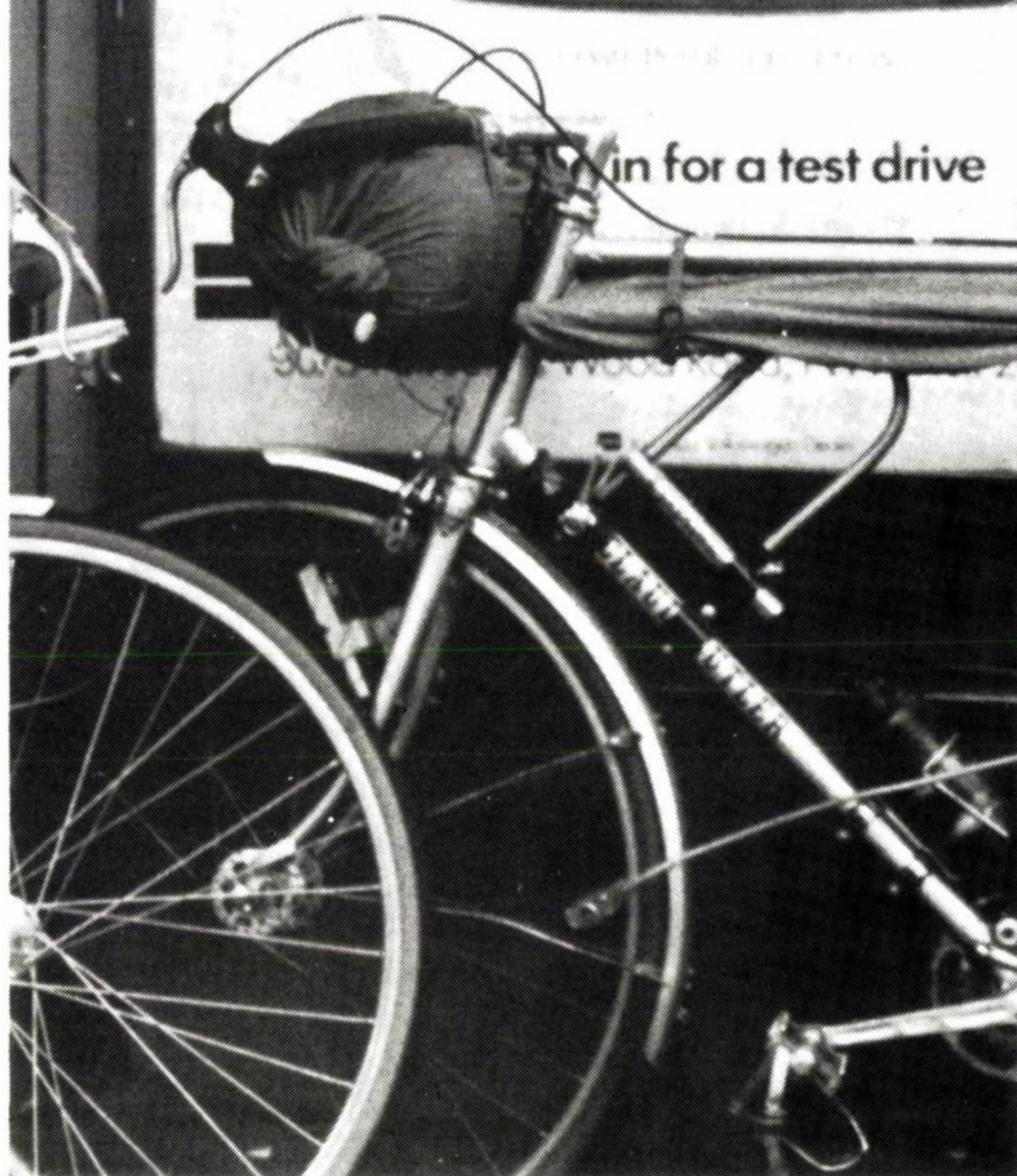
UNITED STATES

Greenpeace, Waste Trade Campaign, 1436U Street NW, Washington DC 20009. Tel 202 462 1177. **Natural Resources Defense Council**, 122E 42 Street, New York, NY 10168. Tel 212 9490049. **US Environment Protection Agency**, Office of International activities, 811 West Tower, 401 M St SW, Washington DC 20460. Tel 202 382 4870.

Same principle. Different priorities.



in for a test drive



WE can all help the earth. Every moment presents an opportunity to cycle instead of drive, campaign for a cleaner world or demand products which do less damage. Governments and manufacturers are at last beginning to take notice. And in this consumerist age there is one force sure to push them further – the power of the purse.



The price of the future

Driving your car when you could have walked is like cheating at cards – you do it because you can get away with it. So how can protecting the environment be left to individual conscience? Michael Jacobs suggests a better way.

JOKE: How many therapists does it take to change a light bulb? **Answer:** Six – one to do it and five to share the experience. **Another joke:** How much does it *cost* to change a light bulb? **Answer:** A few cents for the new bulb plus – the odd tree killed by acid rain; a small rise in global temperatures from carbon dioxide emissions; a share of the ecological disasters caused by oil spillages; and the occasional nuclear accident.

Not very funny admittedly – but true. All this damage is caused by the use of non-renewable fuels which provide electricity; it is the real cost of a light bulb. Similar kinds of costs are inflicted by other electricity-guzzling household items such as stoves, fridges, washing machines and hot-water systems.

This light-bulb joke has many variations. For example, what does it cost to make a battery? **Answer:** manufacturing a battery uses 50 times

more energy than it generates and the mercury it contains is an atmospheric toxin, especially if the battery is incinerated after disposal. Even an innocent-looking cup of coffee creates soil erosion because of over-production on coffee plantations and chronic water pollution during processing. Oh, and plantation workers sometimes earn as little as 25 cents a day...

These are sick jokes at the expense of people who have nothing to do with the production or consumption of a product – but who end up paying the costs.

The hidden costs of electricity, for example, are paid by the foresters and fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on trees and fish destroyed by acid rain. The hidden costs of hamburgers are paid by people with skin cancer – because the trays hamburgers are packed in emit a gas that depletes the ozone layer. The greenhouse effect and radioactivity from

nuclear waste hurt people not even born.

So next time you complain about high prices in the supermarket, remember what you don't have to pay for. Perhaps every coffee jar should carry a label: 'Special Offer – 10,000 per cent off!'

Economists call these hidden costs 'externalities': costs which are external to the consumer and the producer. Imagine that products are like boxes. When a firm sells something, all the production costs should be inside the box with the consumer paying the full amount that it has cost to make the product. But in fact the box has holes: many of the costs spill out, falling onto other people.

The invisible elbow

Sometimes these external costs are paid in money. The West German timber industry loses around \$800 million each year from the effects of acid rain. And agriculture pays further costs of \$600 million in the loss of soil fertility which is also the fault of acid rain.² But often the costs are not quantifiable. How do you measure the cost of brain damage to a child? And what price do you place on the species made extinct in the rainforest?

Nearly all environmental problems are 'externalities'. If consumers had to suffer all the pollution caused by the products they bought, they wouldn't buy them in

such damaging quantities. It is precisely because costs are passed on to third parties that we let them occur. Environmental degradation is a genuine case of passing the muck.

There is an exception – the contamination of food and water by chemicals is an externality. If you buy a fruit or vegetable coated with pesticide residues then you are the person being poisoned. You are paying the cost of the pollution yourself – although lots of other people may pay too, such as the workers spraying the pesticides and future generations whose water is polluted. This is why there has been such a boom in organic foods and mineral waters. Consumers may not care what happens to others but they are certainly worried about the costs they pay themselves.

But all the other environmental problems affect people too indirectly to make them act. How many people will voluntarily give up driving cars to prevent acid rain or global warming? If I act alone it won't have any significant effect on the problem. So if I don't know that you will co-operate with me, why should I lose out by cutting down on my consumption?

Because only co-operative action can tackle environmental problems, they will not be resolved by unhampered market forces. Indeed, it is precisely market forces which bring them about. Environmental problems occur through the combination of millions of individual economic decisions. These decisions are taken privately, without reference to what everyone else is doing, because nobody can know what everyone else is doing. Added together, market forces generate an overall result which no-one can predict.

This is the 'invisible hand' which the economist Adam Smith argued brought general prosperity. But it can equally be an 'invisible elbow' which brings the earth's precarious ecological balance crashing down like a pile of cans in a supermarket.

Bronzed, rich and dying

To protect the environment we must force consumers and producers to make decisions which take wider interests into account. We need to 'internalize the externalities' – to bring all the costs back into the box so that the consumer pays the full price. Market forces have to be controlled and there are two main mechanisms for doing it.

The first is regulation. Consider the case of the stereotypical Californian – tall, fit, bronzed, driving carefree down the freeway. In fact 98 per cent of Southern Californians suffer from the effects of photochemical smog – the thick pall of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxides and ozone which hangs over the area around Los Angeles. Stinging eyes, heart attacks and respiratory diseases are common; Southern Californians have one of the highest premature-death rates in the US.

Autopsies have revealed teenagers with the lungs of 50-year-old smokers. On two days out of three in 1988 the air exceeded national health standards. On 75 days the smog was so bad that schoolchildren were advised to stay indoors.

Why? Because Southern Californians drive nearly 100 million miles every day in their cars. Exhaust emissions are mainly responsible for the smog, exacerbated by the area's famous sunshine – which reacts chemically with the pollutants – and its geography, which traps the air above the main cities.

By last year the crisis had reached such proportions that Southern California introduced radical new regulations to control air pollution. The new Air Quality Management Plan is the most comprehensive of its kind: perhaps not in its approach to tree conservation – the paper it is written on stacks three feet high – but in its determination to force producers and consumers to stop passing on their muck by law.

The new regulations cover every source of air pollution from barbecue lighter fuel – which is now banned – to pesticides. Their main thrust is against motor vehicles. It is now compulsory for all firms with more than 25 employees to have a 'car journey reduction plan', cutting down on the use of cars to get to work. Firms can comply however they like – setting up car pools, introducing a four-day week, moving nearer to residential areas. But failure to do so brings fines of up to \$25,000 a day.

The scheme offers incentives too. Highways are being split down the middle, with special 'car pool lanes' for vehicles carrying more than two passengers, allowing them to cruise past the traffic jams. A whole new car-pool road is even being built in Orange County.

The regulations are forcing people to stop using petrol as the major vehicle fuel. Within ten years 40 per cent of cars, 70 per cent of trucks and all buses will be forced to run on methanol, natural gas or electricity. And new drive-in establishments like banks and fast-food bars are to be banned.

California has decided that the way to control pollution is by law. But other places are experimenting with a different mechanism: controlling the market.

In West Germany, France and the Netherlands, factories which emit pollutants into rivers are taxed according to the volume and strength of their emissions. This gives them a direct financial incentive to reduce pollution: doing so means lower taxes. In some areas of the US, 'pollution permits' are sold, allowing the owner to discharge a certain volume of pollutants. By controlling the total number of permits available, the authorities can determine the overall amount of waste discharged.

Some economists believe that this kind of market mechanism is the most effective

way of reducing pollution. One such is the 'carbon tax' whereby fossil fuels are taxed according to their carbon content. This raises the cost of coal, oil, and gas, encouraging energy efficiency and the development of renewable alternatives. Such a tax would be levied internationally.

The cost of happiness

Another possible scheme is the pollution added tax whereby products would be taxed according to their environmental unfriendliness. Throwaway products would be heavily penalized, while recycled items would be tax-free. When such a scheme was introduced in Oregon in the 1970s it resulted in 90 per cent of bottles being saved for recycling.

Both mechanisms mean that prices will rise: we will be paying the full cost of the things we buy. And because higher prices would hurt the poor more than the rich, it is essential that environmental problems are not seen in isolation from social ones. The 'cost of greening' must be fairly shared – by reducing taxes and increasing welfare benefits for the poor, and by subsidizing essential items like electricity, water and transport.

This is all very well, you might say, but what effect would it have on living standards? Does 'green' mean less?

In terms of the consumption of material things, the answer is probably yes. But the quality of people's lives will improve in other ways. They will be healthier. They won't have to travel so far to work. They will have more leisure and less stress. Expenditure patterns will shift to services instead of goods: education, arts, leisure, communal activities and personal development will all play a bigger part in our lives. And who knows, people might even be happier. □

Michael Jacobs is co-author (with Victor Adamson) of *The Green Economy: On Environment, Work and the Future*, shortly to be published by Pluto Press.

1 *How to be Green*, John Button (Century Hutchinson, 1989). 2 *ibid.* 3 *The Gaia Atlas of Planet Management*, edited by Norman Myers (Pan, 1985). 4 *The Observer*, UK, 3 Sept 1989.

WHAT
YOU
CAN DO

- **Lobby for change.** Join political and environmental groups that are trying to introduce environmental protection measures by law.
- **Make the rich pay.** If environmental-protection legislation is introduced, taxes and prices will rise. The danger is that poor people will not be protected; vigilance and campaigning are needed to ensure that they are.

Green Grow the Neutrons-0

The advertising world can turn anything green – including nuclear power. Robert Woods reveals some of the tricks of the trade.

In a British advertising agency, two stereotypes – both with striped shirts and red braces – are talking.

Justin: OK, Nigel, clients due in 10 minutes, let's have a final run through. The brief is: with environmental consciousness as consumer flavour-of-the-month, we have to Make Nuclear Power Green.

Nigel: We have to make nuclear power seem green.

Justin: Same thing, Nige old boy. The Government must be seen to be green. The Government in its wisdom has backed nuclear power, so nuclear power must be seen to be green as well. Dammit, there are votes at stake. No-one minds a few Greenpeace loonies demonstrating, but when you get nice middle-class housewives not wanting a nuclear station in their backyard, you're in trouble. One government has already fallen over green issues.

Nigel: Only a Dutch one.

Justin: Yes, but even so. We can avert that danger here. If people buy Volvos because they think a better car will plug the hole in the ozone layer, they will buy nuclear power on the same principle.

Nigel: Oh, stop getting so philosophical. Just give me the facts.

Justin: There are no facts in advertising. You know that.

Nigel: I mean the facts that we're meant to sell. About nuclear power being environment-friendly.

Justin: 'It's clean, it's safe, it's non-polluting, and, as we both know:

Both: IT DOESN'T ADD TO THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT'

Realizing that they have an easy theme for an otherwise unsellable product, they join hands and do a music-hall turn singing:

NonpollutingOzoneplugging-
GreenseemingGreenhousesaving
NUKE!

Nigel: Yes, folks, dirty coal-burning power stations create carbon dioxide – the greenhouse gas that warms the earth, brings disastrous climate changes, melts our ice-caps

and threatens to flood our cities. Only Batman Can Avert This Threat!

Justin: You mean 'Only Nuclear Power Can Avert This Threat!'

Nigel: Yes, sorry – got a bit carried away there.

Stops the music-hall turn, and comes down to earth.

Nigel: But 40 leading scientists *do* say that carbon dioxide is made in producing uranium and building the reactors, and power stations are not the main source of greenhouse gases anyway; and nuclear programmes divert money from energy-saving programmes, and it takes six years to build a nuclear power station and you can save that amount of carbon dioxide in six months by saving energy.

Justin: You can always find a scientist to back any position, no matter how absurd.

Nigel: But 17 of these are Fellows of the Royal Society.

Justin: Doesn't matter. Their arguments are slightly complex, requiring thought. Against our simple, easy-to-grasp message, they stand no chance. I mean, which is easier to put across in a 40-second commercial?

Nigel: 'It beats as it sweeps as it plugs up the hole in the ozone layer?'

Justin: Precisely, old lad. Not a bad slogan either. But flippancy is better suited to selling food – so unless you buckle down it's back to the Fission Chips account for you.

Nigel: I hate your puns. But listen, we still have an image problem. What about the geese born with heads on backwards? Or the couple who are suing because they couldn't sell their house on account of the plutonium in the vacuum-cleaner dust?

Justin: Those aren't facts, they're fears.

Nigel: Chernobyl is a fact.

Justin: Chernobyl is the biggest fear that we are trying to stop people thinking about.

Nigel: How do we do it?

Justin: We reassure them that it won't

happen again without actually mentioning that it did happen. A simple code-word is all we need, understood by everybody. It is...

Nigel: Responsibility.

Justin: Exactly.

Nigel: As in 'With This Much Power Comes This Much Responsibility'.

Justin: The implication is clear enough, I think. Our power-station workers are far too responsible to fiddle with controls they don't understand. They are dependable. Salt of the earth. Not like the Russians – you'd expect *their* nuclear power stations to go wrong.

Nigel: I know – maybe we should rename nuclear power. A rose by any other name smells infinitely sweeter.

Justin: Patience, boyo, not till after the next accident. But you are right about the image. We have to get nuclear power seen as the Volvo of the power industry: safe, efficient and reliable.

Nigel: But without a safety cage?

Justin: Analogies can be carried too far. Right. Let's see Presentation One. Stick the video in, Nigel. This is the *play-on-fear-of-Greenhouse-effect* one.

**NONPOLLUTINGOZONE
PLUGGINGGREENSEEMING
GREENHOUSESAVING
NUKE!**



The lights dim. The video flickers into action. A portentous voice announces:

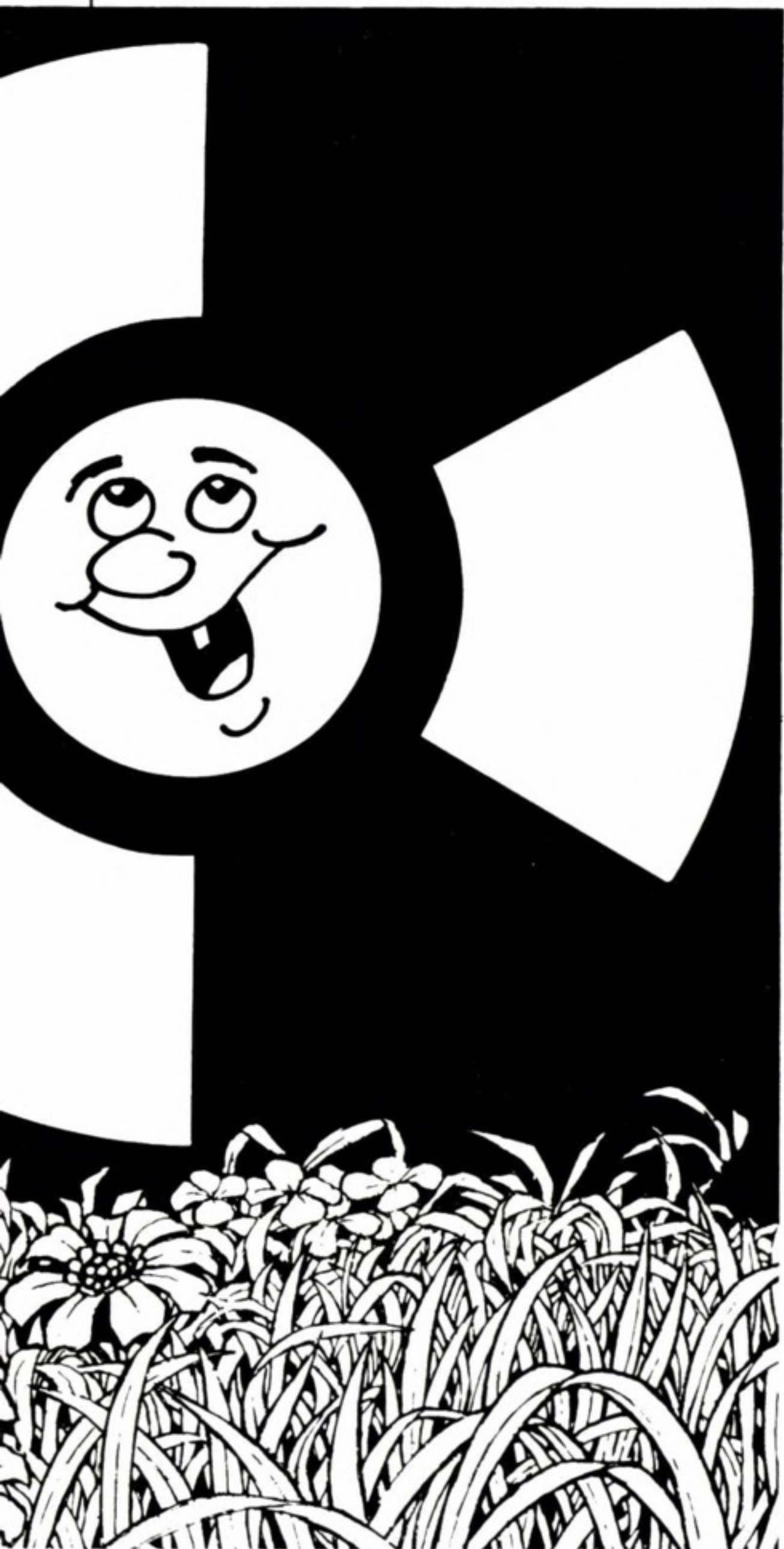
Portentous Voice: 'Scientists say that the greatest threat to our planet is global warming ...' (Picture of a child with a garden hose under a blazing sun. The water from the hose stops. The child looks fearfully at the sky.) 'The greenhouse effect ...' (Picture changes to a different child standing in a desert.) 'Glaciers melt ...' (Picture of a lump of ice, dripping: time is running out.) 'The seas rise, flooding our cities ...'

(Threatening picture of a wave rising to overwhelm; seen from the front, as if the viewer is about to be swallowed and filmed in slow motion to add tension.)

Portentous Voice (turning kind): 'Suppose there was a power that *didn't* add to the greenhouse effect; that didn't burn limited fossil fuel. A power that served humankind without harming the planet we live on. A *clean* power. Shouldn't we have the courage to embrace that power?'

(Picture of skylark ascending. Clear blue sky. Happy music. Caption across screen: 'Nuclear Power: Courage for a Clean Future'.)

Portentous Voice again: 'Some day, your children will thank you ...'



Nigel collapses into laughter. He intones:

Nigel: Suppose there was a power that caused birth defects in sheep and people. That made the Irish Sea the most radioactive stretch of water in the world. That produced a form of waste that was highly toxic and radioactive; that will remain dangerous for thousands of years and that no-one has yet thought of a way of disposing of? Shouldn't we have the courage to say 'This is not a terribly good idea?'

Justin: Be fair, this ad was your brainchild.

Nigel: How true. The things we all do to earn an honest living. And seeing as it was my brainchild, would you not say it was possibly the best commercial of all time?

Justin: No. Too messianic, too end-of-the-worldish. And with a sensitive subject like nuclear power, the end of the world is the last thing we want to remind the punters of.

Nigel: You prefer your idea of the vile, lisping child, I suppose?

Justin: Actually, I do. It puts over the message succinctly and simply: nuclear power is clean – coal power is dirty. And there are a lot of hidden fears about coal miners as bogey-men we can play on: nasty dark creatures from underground...

Nigel: But we've used the lisping child gag in the electricity commercials already, haven't we? A horrid kid actor mouthing fake-innocent puns: 'You can eat a currant bun so why can't you eat an electric current?'

Justin: We've used it before, so what? Why knock a winning system? Stick it in the video.

The lights dim as before.

(Shot of seven-year-old child waiting in nice middle-class hallway for daddy to come home. A playmate is alongside.)

Child 1: 'My daddy handles more power (*lisping*) than your daddy. My daddy makes power for *everyone*.'

Child 2: 'Mummy says that in the old days (*pensive*) daddy would have worked down a coal mine to make power for people, and he'd have come home all black and dirty, and the coal he made would have covered everything with soot and smoke.'

(Camera pans through window to show that the front garden is green and beautiful with no industry in sight.)

Child 1: 'I don't think I'd like hugging daddy if he was all covered in soot like from a fireplace. It would make my clothes all dirty.'

Child 2: 'It would make *everything* dirty.'

Child 1: 'What, the whole world?'

Child 2: 'Yes, that's what my mummy says. And the air, and the sea, and the garden...'

(Daddy strides down the garden path, walks in with briefcase to show he no longer uses a pick-axe. He bends to embrace children. Close-up of brief case reveals a Nuclear Fuels logo on it. Caption across screen reads: 'Responsible Power. For Responsible People'.)

Justin: I like that. It shows that nuclear power workers are nice, middle-class people who wouldn't hurt the environment for anything.

Nigel: Nuclear workers for nuclear families, I suppose.

Justin: And what's wrong with that? Our man with a briefcase almost certainly drives a Volvo. The ad works at a subconscious level too.

Nigel: OK, OK – but we'd better hurry. The client should be here any minute. Have we got the brochure?

Justin: Yes.

Nigel: Did we change the cover to green?

Justin: Yes.

Nigel: Did we print it on recycled paper?

Justin: God, no, it would look like bog-roll. What sort of cheapskate outfit would they think we are? We're trying to impress people, remember, not save the world...

Robert Woods (a pseudonym) is a sleeper working undercover for a right-wing UK newspaper.

WHAT

YOU

CAN DO

- **Save electricity.** Turn off lights; insulate roofs, tanks and pipes; fit a thermostat to your boiler; make your doors and windows draught-proof.
- **Campaign against nuclear power.** Nuclear power is just as dangerous as coal power. There have already been a series of devastating accidents – most notably at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. Much of the waste cannot be reprocessed or disposed of safely and therefore threatens to pollute the environment for thousands of years to come. And there are concerns that small amounts of radioactive materials constantly leak from power plants into the surrounding area, causing cancer in humans.
- **Cultivate healthy scepticism.** There is as yet no completely safe and efficient power-source so don't believe anyone who says there is. The best rule is to conserve energy and to increase funding for research into renewable energy sources.

HOW GREEN ARE YOU?

There is more to being green than recycling your newspapers and using unleaded fuel. Here is a chance to test your ecological intelligence.

1. Which of the following does not pollute indoor air?

- a) carpets made of artificial fibre
- b) electrical equipment
- c) household solvents
- d) chipboard furniture

2. Which uses the most energy?

- a) fridge
- b) cooker/stove
- c) washing machine

3. What is the best way to make cars ecologically safer?

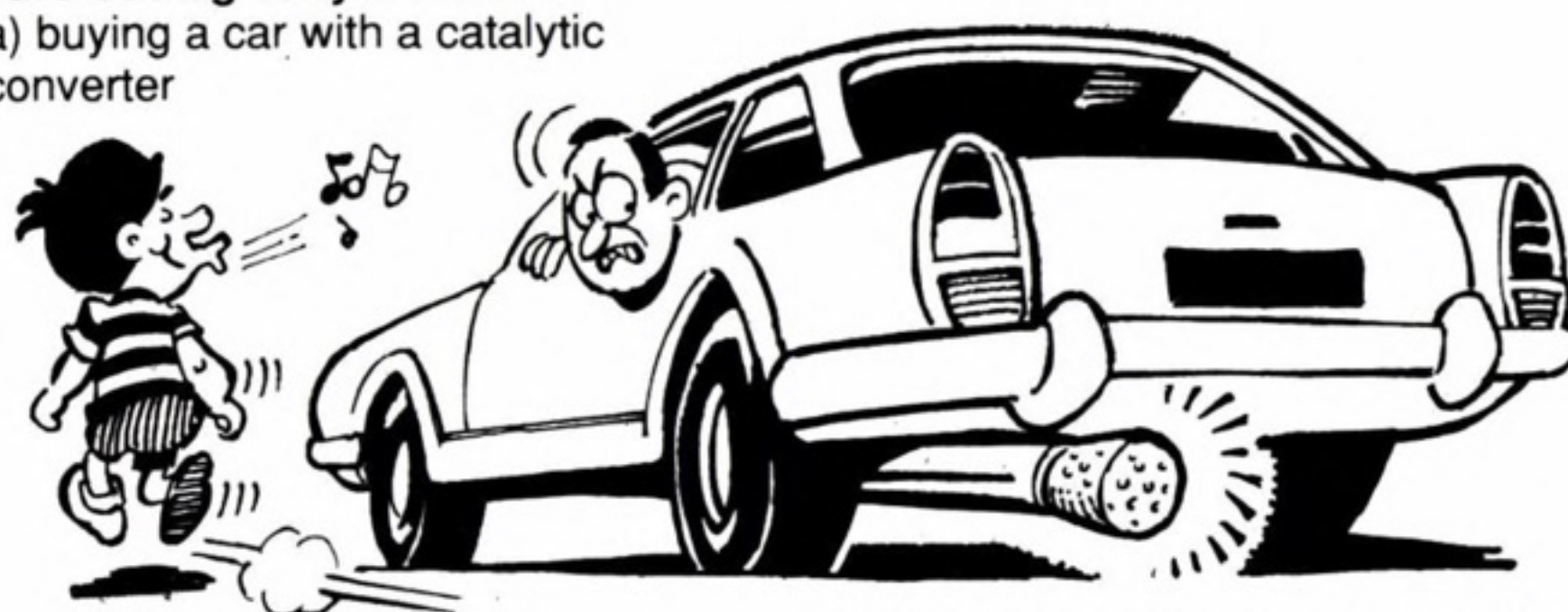
- a) buying a car with a catalytic converter

5. Which of the following does not damage human health?

- a) metal polish
- b) aspirin
- c) roast beef
- d) excessive intake of vitamin C

6. Which uses the most water in your home?

- a) the toilet
- b) the bath
- c) the washing machine
- d) the dishwasher



- b) using unleaded petrol
- c) buying a more fuel-efficient car

4. How much food colouring will a child have eaten by the age of 12?

- a) a tablespoon full
- b) a large cup full
- c) four large cups full

7. Which one of these statements about 'ozone-friendly' (non-CFC) aerosol cans is true?

- a) they contain no ozone-damaging propellants
- b) they are biodegradable
- c) they are an energy-intensive form of packaging
- d) they are recyclable

ANSWERS

1. a) High-voltage electrical equipment and household appliances with bad connections can produce toxic ozone. Chipboard and other pressed wood products are made with a resin containing formaldehyde, an irritant and suspected carcinogen. They have been identified by the US Environmental Protection Agency as an important source of indoor air pollution, along with air fresheners and cleaning solvents.

2. b) The cooker/stove is one of the most energy-hungry machines in the house but gas is more efficient than electricity. Ask about the energy-consumption of gadgets when you buy them.



3. a) All these options are useful but a catalytic converter will cut out 90 per cent of emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and hydrocarbons. These gases are toxic and damage human health; the second also contributes to acid rain and the last is the main cause of photochemical smog. However, a catalytic converter does not tackle carbon-dioxide emissions, which contribute to the greenhouse effect. By far the best course is to use your car less.

4. b) By the age of 12 years old a child will have eaten about half a pound weight of coal-tar in the form of food colouring and dye. Some colourings cause allergies and hyperactivity, while the effects of many others are unknown.



5. d) Taking too much vitamin C is unlikely to be harmful. Metal polish, on the other hand, often contains ammonia which can burn skin and petroleum distillates which are highly poisonous if swallowed; aspirin – one of the most widely used painkillers – can damage the stomach lining and is dangerous for people with stomach ulcers and kidney problems; and more cases of salmonella food poisoning were caused by beef in the UK during 1984 than by any other single meat.

6. a)

Major uses of water in the home

Use	Average water consumption (litres/gallons)	% of total water used
WC flush	10/2.2 a flush	32
Baths and showers	80/17.6	17
Washing machines	100/22 per wash	
Dishwashers	50/11 a wash	12

7. c) Some non-CFC aerosol propellants still damage the ozone layer. And the manufacture of aerosols consumes considerable resources. Refillable pump-action containers are preferable.

8. b) Only a negligible amount of paper used in the West derives from Amazon trees. But vast tracts of tropical forest are destroyed to create grazing for cattle, usually owned by rich ranchers who already have too much land. Tropical forests are also destroyed to make way for the hydro-electric plants to smelt bauxite – used in aluminum cans. And the burning of wood contributes to the greenhouse effect.

9. c) Relying on bottled water encourages a wasteful trade. Besides the cost of fuel for transport there is the expense of packaging. And there is no way of checking that bottled water is any cleaner than tap water. Rain is often too polluted to drink. Boiling tap water does nothing to remove harmful pesticide traces. But a dual-water-supply would mean that only less good water would be used for wasteful practices like using garden sprinklers and washing the car.



10. c) Even disposable nappies/diapers which claim to be biodegradable are in practice virtually indestructible. It is increasingly difficult to find sufficient land to bury them. The unbleached disposable diapers which have recently become available should not be called ozone-friendly as bleached nappies do not damage the ozone layer.

8. Only one of the following is not associated with the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. Which is it?
 a) greedy Brazilian land barons
 b) paper-consumption in the West
 c) soft-drinks cans
 d) the greenhouse effect

9. Which is the best way of improving the quality of drinking water?
 a) buying bottled water
 b) collecting water in a barrel
 c) lobbying for a dual water-supply system
 d) boiling tap water

10. Which of the following statements about disposable nappies/diapers is true?
 a) they damage the ozone layer during production
 b) they are biodegradable
 c) they are the US's second biggest refuse problem
 d) they are the US's second biggest refuse problem

11. Which is the best way to dispose of waste?
 a) burning waste in incinerators to generate energy
 b) recycling
 c) composting



12. Which is the most environmentally-friendly form of energy?
 a) nuclear power
 b) coal
 c) gas
 d) oil

13. Pentachlorophenol is
 a) a soft plastic made with a dangerous gas
 b) a toxic emission from car exhausts
 c) a powerful poison contained in many wood preservatives
 d) a banned chemical that was contained in artificial sweeteners

14. Which of the following has not been associated with increased rates of miscarriage?
 a) sleeping under electric blankets
 b) working in operating theatres
 c) too much sex
 d) VDU (visual display unit) use
 e) excessive coffee consumption

15. Ecologists agree that eating less meat is better for you and the environment. Which of the following is untrue?
 a) many crops produced in the Third World go to fatten up livestock for Westerners' consumption
 b) meat contains residues of antibiotics, pesticides and hormones
 c) vegetarians can expect to live nine years longer than meat eaters
 d) meat-eating in the West is the main cause of world hunger

16. Which of these statements about 'environmentally sound' washing powder is untrue?
 a) it can be used in the washing machine as well as for handwashes
 b) it contains no phosphates
 c) it contains no bleach
 d) it contains no enzymes

17. Which of the following does not pose a risk to wildlife?
 a) discarded condoms
 b) railways
 c) tourist souvenirs
 d) acid rain

18. Which one of these statements about plastic cling-film is untrue?
 a) it may cause cancer
 b) it soaks into fatty foods like



cheese and meat
 c) it is less harmful at lower temperatures
 d) it contains bacteria which can cause salmonella

either. The prospect of dealing with endless buckets of towelling nappies can be very daunting. A growing trend in North America is for parents to pay a laundry service to pick up a bucket each day.



11. **b)** Incinerators sound like a good option but they release highly toxic gases. If the temperature in an incinerator is below 900 degrees centigrade – as it often is – plastics, pesticides and wood preservatives can give off dioxins which are among the most poisonous substances known. Composting is good, though highly labour-intensive because the rubbish has to be sorted manually into biodegradable and non-biodegradable material. But recycling at least saves on raw materials.

12. **c)** Gas appliances are usually more energy-efficient and cheaper to run than electric ones. Gas also produces less pollutants than oil or coal – which generate large amounts of sulphur and nitrogen dioxide: these end up as acid rain. Nuclear power carries the risk of accidents and produces radio-active waste which will pollute the environment for centuries. There is no totally 'green' energy source and if we want to help the environment we must be sparing with what we use and campaign for renewable energy sources – like wind, wave and solar power – to be invested in and taken more seriously.

13. **c)** Applied to timber it is meant to keep fungi away by killing spores, but it remains active for many years and is a health hazard not only for people in their homes, but also for the workers who make it. Cirrhosis of the liver, bone-marrow atrophy and nervous disorders are all part of the price paid for this common household poison.

14. **c)** Decreased fertility and increased miscarriages have been recorded among couples who sleep under electric blankets – because of the zigzagging wires which generate electromagnetic radiation. Prolonged exposure to anaesthetics has been associated with reproductive problems, and cathode-ray VDU screens have long been suspected of causing foetal deformities and miscarriages. In the US pregnant women are advised to drink less coffee.



15. **d)** Because of **a)**, our consumption of meat is connected with the world food problem but there are other much more significant causes: the most significant of all is simply poverty, since well-off people never starve even in a famine-stricken country. But vegetarian diets are so much healthier overall that they significantly increase people's life expectancy.

16. **c)** Some washing powders are pure soap flakes and therefore do not contain bleach. But most 'alternative' powders still do, although the bleach is sometimes packaged separately.



17. **b)** The increased use of condoms due to the spread of AIDS is causing farmers to worry that discarded condoms could choke their grazing bulls. Tourist souvenirs like furs, ivory, animal skins, coral necklaces and shells can devastate wildlife. And acid rain is killing the fish in lakes across the rich world. But while trains kill some creatures that cross the line, they preserve a wild habitat for many more creatures in their cuttings and help minimize the much greater destruction wrought by cars and roads.

18. **d)** Cling-film does not cause salmonella.

THE VERDICT

15+ **Dark Green:** Very aware of green issues and the practical side of green living. Your understanding of the earth's plight is greening everything and everyone around you.

10-14 **Light Green:** Growing greener by the minute. The world may be shrivelling around you but you are doing your bit to bring it to life again.

5-9 **See-through:** Try a bit harder – or you may not be able to hold up your head when your children ask what they can expect from the future.

0-4 **Brown:** Your head is firmly in the sand.



The taste of salvation

Sugar was like a revenge of the slaves, ravaging the health of the West. But the deadly diet of the rich is now being exported to the Third World. Geoffrey Cannon explains how you can save the planet by saving yourself.

UNTIL the middle of the nineteenth century, the Highland Scots were the tallest and heaviest of the European peoples. The average height of a man was six feet, while seven-foot giants were by no means uncommon. Of 600 crofters evicted from Glen Tilt at the end of the eighteenth century, not one was less than six feet in height or measured less than 17 inches around the calf. People remained active long after their eightieth year, and ages of over a hundred were common.

The staple diet of the Highlanders at this time was oatmeal porridge, cakes made from barley or stoneground oat-flour, vegetables, milk, butter, eggs and cheese with occasional fish, beef, venison,

wild fruits, honey and the famous Scottish soups.¹

But things have changed. Today the rates of premature death among people under 65 are higher in Scotland and Northern Ireland than in any other European country.² What has happened?

Dr Walter Yellowlees has spent much of his life working in the Scottish county of Perthshire, where he has daily encountered diseases related to poor nutrition such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and above all cancer. 'When visiting patients at mealtimes,' he says, 'I have been repeatedly appalled at what was on the family table: things like tinned vegetables, white bread, biscuits, sweet drinks, and, in

place of porridge, the ubiquitous sweetened breakfast cereals.'

His observations reinforce the findings of the Royal College of Physicians – that whole fresh food is healthy and highly processed food is not. Their report concludes that people should be 'enabled and encouraged to eat foods which are closer to the natural grain, vegetable or fruit than the highly processed and refined products which now form a large part of our food.'

Dr Yellowlees goes further. He explains Scotland's dietary changes in terms of the Highland Clearances which destroyed the peasantry. Small industries were destroyed and people driven to the cities where they were forced to switch from home-grown food to imported processed food. In England too, industrialization meant that peasants became the first working class and were alienated from the earth and its fruits. They subsisted on primitive versions of the 'store food' that wrecks the health of the dispossessed urban poor all over the world today: white bread and flour, white sugar and fat, some salted meat or fish, pitifully little fresh food.

Sugar was one of the most destructive elements of the new diet. The British sweet tooth was cultivated by sugar traders who formed the third side of the triangular slave trade: British cotton goods were exported to Africa, African slaves to the West Indies and West Indian sugar to Britain. Rotten teeth and all other sugar-related diseases are like a revenge of the slaves.

Today Britain is notorious as the country with the worst food in the world – and therefore the worst record of suffering and premature death from non-infectious diseases. It shares this reputation with countries that were once British colonies and where native peoples who had lived in harmony with nature were massacred: Canada, the US, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The British swept aside traditional food-and-agriculture systems in all the countries they ruled, replacing them with food-store and cash-cropping. And the destruction continues even now as Third World countries are devastated by the highly processed, chemicalized food and agriculture exported to them by the West.

'Now that we know British food is just about the worst in the world,' says Jonathon Porritt, director of Friends of the Earth UK, 'how ironic it is that we and other rich nations are exporting fat and sugar to starving people in Africa and Asia. Early colonists ravaged native populations with syphilis and typhoid. Now it's heart disease and cancers.'

This is done not only in the name of trade but also of aid. Nutritionists from the London School of Hygiene report that refugees in Africa are dying in their thousands from vitamin-deficiency diseases caused by the sugary, fatty food

supplied by aid agencies.

Sri Lanka is a good example of this dietary imperialism. Its national policy has opened the door to the West: and that means Western food. Advertisements reflect this fad. 'Write in your own handwriting "I'm a Vegemite Kid",' reads one. Village hoardings are covered with adverts for Astra margarine – a product made of saturated fat so hard that it stays solid even in tropical heat.

In the supermarkets of Colombo and Kandy, Puffa-Puffa-Rice breakfast cereal is on sale for the equivalent of three dollars a packet. Hoardings for Nespray – the Nestlé dried milk – are everywhere. And fly-posters promote a 'Build a Motor Bike Contest with Coca-Cola'.

Not everyone in Sri Lanka is deceived. 'What has happened to mankind (sic)?' asks a doctor in a Colombo *Daily News*

article, side-by-side with the ads for Lemon Puffs, Orange Crush and Lakspray. 'Cardiovascular and coronary heart diseases are a major public-health problem,' he writes. 'The diet should not have excessive calories and saturated fats.'

Sri Lanka would never have such problems if the country relied on its own resources – if it cultivated appreciation of native food and agricultural systems which have evolved over centuries to meet the population's needs.

People in the Sri Lankan countryside have got the right idea. By the bus-stop outside the baby-elephant orphanage at the Udawattakelle Forest Reserve, a little roadside shop sports a massive Coca-Cola sign. 'That's for tourists,' commented the owner, handing me a king coconut. He slashed the top off. 'No chemicals in this,'

he said. 'Natural.'

Our problem in the West is that we have forgotten where food comes from, and therefore we ignore its real value. But food and agriculture are the original environmental issues. It is a law of nature that when food and agriculture become business commodities, the health, the culture and the very identity of that nation will eventually be destroyed.

This has happened all over the Western world and we must now start to pick up the pieces. As Jonathon Porritt says: 'Our environment starts with ourselves, and with our own wholeness and health. We can begin to clean up our act by eating whole, fresh food and by working for a high-quality, environmentally benign food supply'.

Healthy eaters look for food which has good nutritional quality. Green eaters go further, buying food with good environmental quality as well. For example, most people buy free-range eggs not only for the extra taste and nourishment, but also because they approve of the conditions in which the hens are kept. Refusing to buy Outspan oranges from South Africa is making another sort of green choice.

In the 1980s, what came out of the mouths of environmentalists was mostly green; what went in, was often junk. In the 1990s, thinking and talking green means acting and therefore eating green. Saving the planet and saving yourself are indivisible. It is no accident that the words 'health', 'whole', 'healing' and even 'holy' all derive from the same root. □

Geoffrey Cannon is secretary of the British Guild of Food Writers and author of *The Politics of Food*. He wishes to make contact with anybody in the world who is concerned to protect the quality of indigenous food and agriculture systems. Please write to him at 6 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11 1BP.

The scent of victory

Flies storm the food. Houses stink of rotting waste. Children are ill. Finally the women of Buntong Tiga can stand it no longer – they take action. Mary Bala reports.

WHY don't you take care of the child? She's always sick,' Samy shouts above the baby's screams. His wife, Meena, shoots an anguished glance at the infant and yells back. 'I do take care of her. It must be these damned flies. You are a municipal worker; you should do something about them.' Samy slaps her face and storms out, criticizing her for suggesting actions that could cost him his job.

Domestic disputes like this happen every day between the 1,000 squatters who live in Buntong Tiga, Malaysia. They have been living here for seven years but now they are being inundated by refuse. The residents complain to the city council that gave them the land – and discover that it has now designated the area as a garbage dump.

At first people suffer silently, afraid that protest will mean eviction or sackings. But whenever the women meet, their talk always returns to the flies, the unbearable stench and the deteriorating health of their children.

Finally, a small group visits Poopathy – the most educated woman in the area. She agrees to go the city council and lodge a complaint. There is no response. She approaches

Politicians have failed them. In despair the women approach a local consumers' organization – the Education and Research Association for Consumers (ERA) – which takes their complaint seriously.

The ERA is conscious that change can only come from the residents themselves, and it begins to organize the women. A committee is elected. Poopathy is chosen to liaise between the women and ERA, and the group draws up a plan of action. A press conference is held and articles about the dump begin appearing in local newspapers.

Then the women draw up a petition and go from house to house explaining the problem and collecting signatures. Politicians make threats and some husbands forbid their wives to be involved.

The consumer group encourages the women to continue. And shortly afterwards the television carries a special report about them. Buoyed by the media coverage, the women decide to picket the dump. More than 150 women and children gather there. They shout, sing and hold their placards high, demanding the right to a clean, safe, healthy environment. They picket from dawn till dusk, organizing themselves in shifts.

Then the women and children blockade the dump to stop the city council's garbage lorries from entering. The press and television focus on the blockade; public sympathy is aroused. The city council, health officers and politicians begin to react.

The deputy president of the city council, Datuk Haji Umar Abu, visits the site with his entourage and assures residents that the council will stop dumping rubbish in the area. He agrees to cover the garbage with sand and to spray the area with chemicals to kill the flies and mosquitoes. He even suggests turning the area into a recreational park.

The women are overjoyed. Their hard work has paid off. They giggle as their men rush forward in front of the TV camera to ask the deputy president questions. As usual men want to claim the glory. But the women know that they themselves have created a happier, healthier environment for their children. And because of this they are empowered.

Mary Bala is a Malaysian journalist.



politicians who promise action, but months pass and nothing happens.

Meanwhile, the dump grows higher: there are plastic containers filled with decaying food, hundreds of plastic bottles, factory rejects including drugs. Even amputated limbs are found in this smoky mountain. It is a time bomb waiting to explode.

The city council has cheated them.

1 'The Highland Problem' by Ronald Taylor, in *Mother Earth*, (UK Soil Association, Summer 1948). 2 'On the state of the public ill-health: premature mortality in the UK and Europe', by J Catford and S Ford, in *British Medical Journal*, 1984. 3 Jonathon Porritt, director of Friends of the Earth UK, at the Royal Society of Arts' Caroline Walker Lecture, October 1989.

WHAT
YOU
CAN DO

- **Buy fresh produce.** Organically grown fresh fruit and vegetables are better for you and the environment.
- **Choose wholegrains.** Wholemeal cereals, bread, pasta and rice are rich sources of fibre, carbohydrate, B vitamins and protein.
- **Avoid unethically produced food.** And tell shopkeepers why.
- **Eat simply.** As a general rule, the fewer ingredients there are in an item of processed food, the better it is for you.

WASTE - THE FACTS

Westerners are destroying the earth by consuming its wealth in wasteful ways. We are extravagant with limited resources, producing vast amounts of polluting refuse. These facts illustrate why we all need to lessen our impact on the environment.

GALLOPING CONSUMPTION

The rich North consumes 80% of the world's global resources, while three-quarters of the world's population who live in the poor South share what is left.¹



In one year, the average person in the West is likely to:²

- consume more than 264 lbs of paper, compared to an average consumption of just 17.6 lbs per person in the Third World.
- consume over 990 lbs of steel com-

pared with 94.6 lbs in the Third World. ● consume 57.2 lbs of other metals compared with 4.4 lbs in the Third World. ● purchase energy equivalent to almost 6 tons of coal compared with 0.5 tons in the Third World.

DUMPING POISONS

Western industry produces vast amounts of toxic waste, much of which is dumped in the Third World.

- Since 1986 over 3 million tons of toxic waste have been shipped from Western Europe and North America to other countries.³
- About 125,000 tons of toxic waste are sent to the Third World from Europe each year.⁴



WASTING WATER

Westerners waste between 30 and 100 gallons of water daily. The average American flushes away more water every day than a Madagascan uses in three months.⁵

The world's thirstiest countries*

The figures shown are for all uses - industrial, agricultural and domestic.

	Daily total (billions of gallons)	Equivalent per person (gallons)
1. United States	317	1,390
2. Canada	22	910
3. Australia	11	730
4. Netherlands	9	600
5. Italy	33	590
6. Spain	22	580
7. Japan	64	560
8. Belgium	5	550
14. Aotearoa/NZ	1	230
15. United Kingdom	8	150



BRUTAL FARMING

Industrial farming techniques destroy the environment.

- Every decade 7% of the world's soil is lost through large-scale farming techniques. In the US farmers work the soil so hard that an area twice the size of California has been rendered unproductive.⁶
- The use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides is responsible for over half of all water pollution in the US.⁷ By 1983, both European and North American farmers were using about 22 billion tons of artificial fertilizer a year on their fields.⁸
- The numbers of damaging insect species resistant to pesticide have multiplied from 160 to 450 since 1960; between 1950 and 1967 pesticide use in the US shot up by 169%.⁹
- An estimated one million people worldwide are unintentionally poisoned by pesticides every year.¹⁰



SQUANDERING ENERGY

Most energy comes from non-renewable sources; the West cannot sustain its current levels of energy consumption.

- The US has just 6% of the world's population but consumes 30% of the world's energy - compared with India where 20% of the global population use only 2% of the world's energy.¹¹
- Private cars use about 7% of the world's non-industrial energy or 17% of the oil used annually.¹²
- Specially designed houses can cut energy costs by 75 per cent.

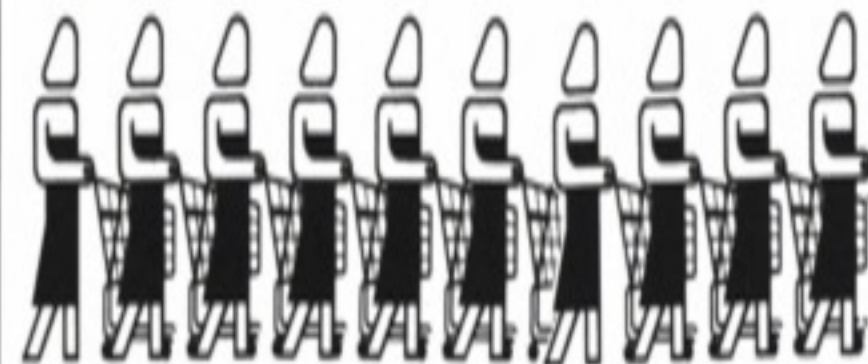


Energy consumed in the home per year measured as barrels of oil	
Barrels of oil per person	
North America	22.0
Australasia	16.5
Scandinavia	13.5
Europe	9.8
Japan	8.5

CONSUMER POWER

Consumers have the power to make governments and industries adopt environment-friendly policies; they have already forced the shift from leaded to unleaded fuel, the replacement of 'hard' detergents with 'soft' and stimulated demand for organically grown produce.

- Manufacturers in the UK attract extra sales from one third of the population when some aspect of a product is green.¹³
- Today more than 2 out of 5 Britons say they buy products on environmental grounds - over double the number who did so in 1988.¹⁴
- In Australia, consumer outrage over Sydney's beach pollution forced the Government to levy a tax of Aus \$80 per year on households, to fund cleaning programmes.¹⁵



THROWAWAY WORLD

Westerners produce more waste than any other society in history. But as the Third World countries industrialize they are beginning to catch up.

	Annual domestic waste ('000 tons)	Equivalent per person (lbs)
1. U.S.	200,000	1,925
2. Australia	10,000	1,496
3. Canada	12,600	1,155
4. Aotearoa	1,528	1,073
5. Norway	1,700	913
6. Denmark	2,046	878
15. U.K.	15,816	620

- As examples of waste in the industrializing Third World here is the amount thrown away per person per year in three major cities: Singapore 538 lbs; Mexico City 321 lbs; and Jakarta 305 lbs.¹⁶

AIR POLLUTION

The atmosphere is being destroyed by Western consumption.

- Several holes have appeared in the ozone layer - the part of the atmosphere that protects us from the sun's harmful rays. The damage is associated with chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) which are used as propellants in aerosols. If the ozone layer thins by just 1% it could result in 15,000 new cases of cancer annually in the US alone.¹⁷
- CFCs are one of the many gases contributing to a heating of the earth's atmosphere known as the greenhouse effect. The temperature has risen by around one degree centigrade over the last 150 years.¹⁸ A rise in average temperatures of three degrees centigrade could result in the melting of glaciers and icecaps, and widespread flooding.
- Car exhausts and the burning of fossil fuels pollute the atmosphere with sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and other chemicals. These combine to cause acid rain which kills forests and lakes. Half of all high level lakes have been damaged in the US, and at least 4,000 of Canada's lakes have died.¹⁹



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Beware the green con

The path of green consumerism is paved with good intentions – but it is also littered with pitfalls. Juliet Kellner explains how to tread safely.



Better but not best: unleaded fuel does not combat the car's other polluting gases.

TODAY is Green Shopping Day. This is the day that I, the consumer, am being asked to 'use my buying power as a vote for the planet'. It is a catchy slogan. But can I really improve my relationship with the earth by going shopping?

The problem is that whatever I consume greenly or ungreenly constitutes a bite out of the earth's resources. And as a member of the Western world, I currently take very large bites. The

average Westerner uses over 260 lbs of paper every year, for example – and as a voracious reader and copious writer, I probably use much more.

Not only do I consume vast amounts of raw materials – I am also a high-level polluter. In the US the average consumer creates nine lbs of hazardous waste every day and gives little indication of slowing down. The extent of our devastation is changing the chemistry of the planet on a scale that it would take nature hundreds of

millions of years to equal.

This harsh reality means that we must do everything possible to limit our impact on the earth. And green consumerism is a step in the right direction. The challenge is for consumers to control the movement so that we do not end up its victims. We can do this best by recognizing its pitfalls.

My daughter encountered one of these quite recently. Eager to be a good green, she spent her entire week's allowance on a giant aerosol spray because it announced itself as 'environment-friendly'. A few days later she discovered that although the can was CFC-free, it contained other gases contributing to the greenhouse effect. She had been hoodwinked into spending money on a product that she cannot, eco-soundly, use. The manufacturer profited from the sale of the can by exploiting her good will towards the planet. But the planet scarcely benefited at all.

My daughter had stumbled into Pitfall Number One for the Unwary Green Consumer – the 'Bit-Less-Bad' trap. The CFC-free aerosol is a bit less bad than one which spews out CFCs – that's one step forward. But my daughter would willingly have advanced two steps and bought a non-aerosol product, had she been more honestly informed; the labelling on the can misled her.

An important task for the green consumer movement, therefore, is to make producers and retailers label their merchandise fully and honestly. The movement must also persuade governments to add their muscle to this reasonable demand; accurate labelling should become a statutory requirement.

Another example of the Bit-Less-Bad trap is unleaded fuel. This does not stop motorists damaging the environment but only stops them destroying it quite so violently. This one-step change is not enough. The real way to protect the earth is to stop motorists from being motorists – or at least to persuade them to use their cars only when absolutely necessary. And nowhere on the advertising hoardings aimed at would-be green motorists, do we see suggestions that we should stop buying cars.

The logic of big business is to promote consumption. So however green-tinted companies become they are unlikely to encourage people to consume less. And this gives the green consumer movement another role: to make shoppers stop before they buy to ask whether they need a product at all.

'We must consider not only the quality of the products we buy, but the quantity,' thunders Jonathon Porritt from Friends of the Earth in the UK. And unless the green consumer movement constantly reiterates this point, it lays itself open to being hijacked by industrialists who simply wish to look green enough to make naive shoppers purchase more of their wares.

The danger of this is very real. Close examination of apparently-green

producers reveals Pitfall Number Two for the Green Consumer – the 'Green Image Game'. An article written for marketing executives entitled 'Selling to the greens? It's not so simple', urges industrialists to include a green benefit in the marketing of all products and services. For example, adding a little recycled paper to a package enables them to claim that the item is made of recycled materials and convey a sense of ecological responsibility. By making products sound as if they are good for the environment, manufacturers can 'attract extra sales from around a third of

the population'.

So *caveat emptor viridis*: let the green buyer beware. You may have sacrificed the comfort of your ultra-soft toilet paper for what you think is the recycled stuff – but it is possible you are being conned. Producers could be exploiting your wish to be ecologically responsible – without taking such responsibility themselves.

Green consumers are easy targets. We are soft sells with dreams in our eyes and money in our pockets. We tell market researchers, hands on our hearts, that we are willing to pay 25 per cent more – no

problem – for goods that are environment-friendly. The researchers listen and tell the producers who can hardly believe their luck – customers who say exactly what they want, and are willing to pay MORE! Small wonder that green products, halfway genuine or frankly fake, are filling up the supermarket shelves.

In fact those with a 'green image' may be little better than the non-green products beside them. But why are non-green products on the same shelf in the first place? This is Pitfall Number Three – 'Niche-marketing', by which each product

SCANDAL!

Environmental groups should not get into bed with business – or should they? Wayne Ellwood investigates.

THE news swept through the Canadian environmental movement last year like a toxic blast: Pollution Probe, Canada's oldest and best-known environmental group, had publicly endorsed a line of 'green' products created by the country's largest supermarket chain, Loblaw's. In return for giving Loblaw's its official seal of approval, Probe was to receive a royalty on sales.

Worse still: Probe's erudite and respected Executive Director, Colin Isaacs, had also agreed to play environmental salesperson for Loblaw's. Canadians long used to seeing environmental campaigners arguing with corporate polluters were stunned to turn on their TV sets and see Isaacs rubbing shoulders with Loblaw's gnome-like marketing genius, David Nichols. Surrounded by a small mountain of 'green' diapers – made with non-chlorine bleached paper and photo-sensitive plastic – Isaacs told viewers, 'If you must use disposable diapers, then use this one'.

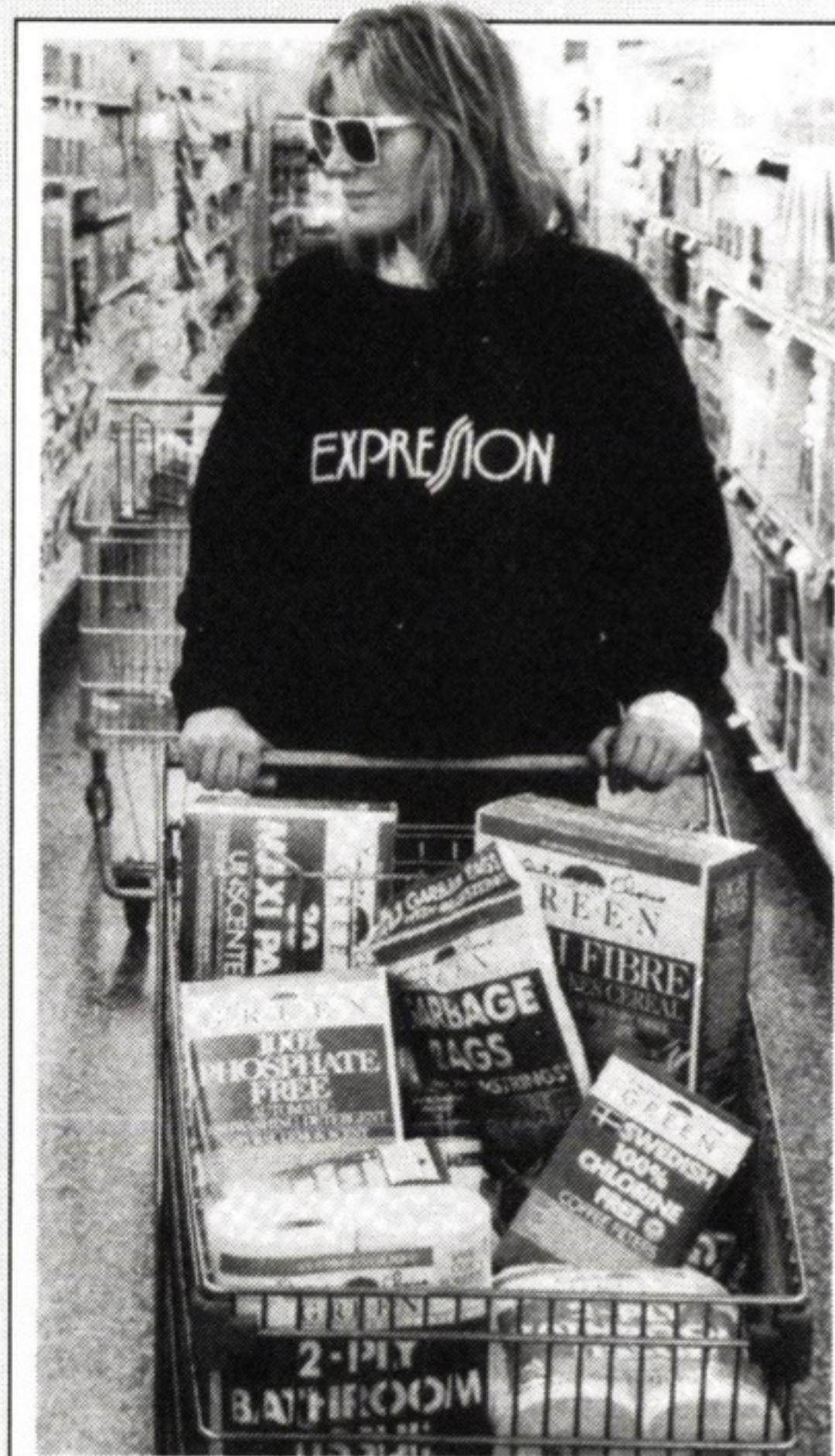
The union of environmentalist and marketing executive was both innovative and shocking. Within Pollution Probe five staffers resigned in protest and Isaacs quit soon after, citing lack of Board support for his position. Probe's liaison with the giant grocery chain – Loblaw's has 30 per cent of Canadian supermarket sales – sparked an instant debate among environmentalists about what kind of relationship they should have with business.

The Pollution Probe staff quit for several reasons. Gord Perks, then in charge of Waste Management at Probe, claims, 'Staff were not consulted. The decision to endorse Loblaw's "green" products was made by Isaacs and a few board members. Even today a small group makes most of the decisions.'

Many staff were embarrassed by the way the decision had been taken. 'I literally found out about our endorsement of used motor-oil from someone I was phoning to find out whether the stuff was OK,' says the group's Education Programme Co-ordinator at the time, Dave Bruer. 'When we asked to see test results so we could recommend the products with some confidence we were told that the data was confidential, between Colin Isaacs and Loblaw's.' Probe's Information Officer at the time, Vanessa Alexander, felt completely compromised by the Loblaw's deal. 'In my view disposable products are not green,' she says. 'I could not in good conscience tell

people to buy disposable diapers.'

Staff also felt great unease about a major environment group cozying up to big business; a significant minority of Probe's employees at the time were opposed to promoting products from any corporation. 'Credibility is the environment movement's most important asset,' explains activist and lawyer Steven Shrybman of the Canadian Environmental



Shopping as a form of political self-expression.

Law Association (CELA). 'Our opinion isn't worth anything if people think it is influenced by self-interest.'

From Loblaw's point of view the deal was a bargain. The company was able to display Probe's endorsement prominently in advertising and on the products themselves. In return, Pollution Probe was to receive a royalty on sales – up to \$75,000 maximum during the first year of the agreement. The company actually sold five million dollars worth of 'green' products in Ontario alone during the first month. Today Loblaw's makes about half a million dollars a week on its 20 or so 'green' products – and sales are increasing.

The company's spokesman, Paddy Carson – a verbose Irishman with an impressive lay command of environmental issues – says that since the row over Probe's involvement, Loblaw's has been deluged with letters of

support. 'The criticism didn't do anything but boost sales,' he admits.

The key player in Probe's decision to promote 'green' products is Colin Isaacs. He saw the Loblaw's link as a chance to use 'consumer power' to make quick progress on environmental issues. Like most activists, Isaacs is fed up with the sloth-like pace with which governments are taking on environmental concerns. 'After a while you feel like you're banging your head against a brick wall,' he says. 'The problems are tremendous and time is short; we can't afford to wait while politicians figure out what to do.'

According to Isaacs the endorsement strategy has already begun to pay off. He cites the proliferation of non-chlorine bleached paper products as a good example. Both environmentalists and public health groups have long been worried about toxic discharges from paper mills using chlorine bleach.

Environmental groups have been lobbying for years about the issue. But neither government nor industry have shown much interest. Now consumer pressure is forcing pulp and paper companies in Western Canada to think about reducing or eliminating the chlorine bleach part of the pulp process. Brisk sales of Loblaw's non-chlorine bleach diapers and sanitary napkins have proven that eco-sensitive consumers will switch their buying habits in favour of the environment.

Even Isaacs' harshest critics agree with his basic analysis: public concern over the environment should be used to put pressure on manufacturers through the marketplace.

But the real danger is that 'buying green' will be seen as the ultimate solution to the environmental crisis. Consumers, finally satisfied that they can 'do something', may seek no further than their shopping trolleys to help the planet.

But 'green products' on their own don't really touch the heart of the problem: at issue is the ideology of consumerism that pervades party politics of left, right and centre. 'It's over-consumption that got us into this mess in the first place,' says Julia Langer.

'Over-consumption is a key concern for Colin Isaacs too. But he argues that Canadians have one of the most consumer-orientated societies on earth. 'We know we have to reduce consumption but we're going to get change more quickly if we do it step-by-step. We're a nation of shoppers so let's use that shopping habit to achieve something right now.'

Wayne Ellwood is a Canadian co-editor of the NI.



Label-monitoring: the new consumer's lot.

is targeted at a specific market.

The supermarket may hand out pretty green-and-white leaflets boasting its environmental concerns. But don't be fooled. The owners' real agenda is to boost the profits they get from customers, green and ungreen. Why else – when there are plenty of environment-friendly products now available – do supermarkets still stock non-green items? And why do manufacturers still make them? Freedom of choice is a feeble rejoinder when the issue is global suicide.

Buying green involves tackling this duplicity. Customers need to know whether the *company as a whole* has an ethical policy – from parent company down to subsidiaries. Otherwise we could find that we are 'voting with our purses' for manufacturers that are anti-ecological – but indirectly so.

Heinz was recently caught like this. According to a Friends of the Earth bulletin, the company won a Green Manufacturer of the Year Award, and was on the point of signing a \$114,000 sponsorship deal to support Green Shopping Day when it suddenly pulled out. It had apparently been made aware of plans to alert green consumers to the slaughter of dolphins by Starkis – one of its subsidiaries. The withdrawal showed how scared companies are of the negative publicity they might receive if they do not clean up their acts right down the line.

Environmental destruction can occur at many points in the life of a product, which leads us to Pitfall Number Four – the 'Cradle-to-Grave Trap'. A friend was recently pushed into this when he bought a CFC-free fridge. He knew he had acquired an object which emitted other noxious gases – Pitfall Number One – but

that wasn't all. He had no way of knowing the quantity of valuable raw materials and energy that had been consumed in the fridge's manufacture. Nor was he told whether the manufacturing process had been polluting or not. Nor did he know if the fridge had been manufactured to last or to become obsolete quickly; nor whether it consumed more or less electricity to run than other models; nor whether, when it was defunct, its parts could or would be recycled.

Many of us tumble into this trap. Yesterday I bought a juicer to feed my family in a healthier, more environmentally-friendly way – less red meat, more vegetables and more fruit – but I completely forgot to raise any of the above questions. Had I remembered, who would I have asked? The harassed sales assistant wouldn't have known the answers. She would have written me off as a time-wasting nut.

We should insist that governments compel industrialists to give us this information as of right. We need to know exactly what damage a product is doing to the environment – from the mining of its raw materials to the end of its life. We have already forced manufacturers to acknowledge some of our 'green' demands. But we can't stop here. If we do we'll be like the man in the cartoon who fell off the Empire State Building and shouted just before he hit the ground 'I'm doing great so far'.

Green consumers have strength and it lies in our growing numbers and our deep personal conviction that we want a planet fit for our children. Producers need us to buy their goods. That gives us power. We must insist on products which do not harm the environment. After all, the future depends on it. □

Juliet Kellner is a writer based in London.

WHAT

YOU

CAN DO

- Before you buy, ask if you really need a product, and if you do, choose one which will do least harm to the environment.
- Join a consumers group and lobby for government legislation to make manufacturers label their products fully and accurately. The labels should say exactly what a product contains. They should also inform shoppers as to the product's environmental friendliness from cradle to grave – evaluated according to standardized criteria. But remember that no label will ever tell you about a company's overall ethical policies.
- Take heart: the green consumer movement has made a significant dent in manufacturing practices over a very short time. You can help it do more by encouraging your friends and family to join.

Ethical shopping

Green shopping guides usually only assess products according to the damage they do to the environment. This is important – but it is not enough. We should also be looking hard at the ethics of the companies involved. In that spirit here is an NI guide to the ethical practices of multinationals selling household cleaning products – as well as advice on what to look for in a washing powder.

Clean ...

The table opposite, compiled by *New Consumer*, evaluates the attitudes and practices of six companies which dominate the world market in household cleaning products. None of these companies has significant involvements in military sales, nuclear power, alcohol, tobacco or gambling. But these areas should also be considered when you are deciding whether a company is clean as well as green.



... and green

Washing powders have a bewildering mixture of ingredients which can be harmful to the environment. Here is a checklist of the nasty elements to watch out for.

- **Surfactants** – make water more efficient as a cleansing agent. Those made from petrochemicals probably take longer to biodegrade than those made from natural ingredients.
- **Phosphates** – soften the water and make it more alkaline. They usually constitute around a quarter of the weight of most washing powders and an even higher proportion of dishwasher powders. A large amount of phosphate in rivers strips the water of oxygen and poisons fish.
- **NTA or EDTA** – are used instead of phosphates, but both pollute drinking water and food by combining with toxic metals already in the environment.
- **Bleaches** – sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate are used in washing powders to remove stains. The former results in boron contamination of rivers – while the latter can only be used with a stabilizer like EDTA – which also pollutes food and water.
- **Enzymes** – digest stains, and are thought to give allergies to workers who handle them.
- **Optical brighteners** – are used to make washed clothes look whiter. They convert invisible ultraviolet light into visible blue light; they are thought to lead to allergies.
- **Preservatives** – are usually made from petrochemical ingredients which have to be manufactured.
- **Plastic packaging** – is mostly non-biodegradable and best avoided.

Company	Brands	Home country of parent company	Annual company turnover 1988 \$ million	Percentage of company profits given to charity	No. on the board of executives who are		Use of animals to test products	Involvements in S Africa (no. of workers in brackets)	No. of companies in the Third World	Donations to political groups
					women	members of ethnic minority				
Procter & Gamble	Ariel, Bold 3, Bounce, Camay, Daz, Dreft, Fairy, Flash, Lenor, Tide, Vortex, Mr Clean, Spic N' Span, Comet	US	18,127	1%+	2+	2+	Yes but is phasing out	Licenses manufacture and sale of its products in SA	27	None in the US
Unilever	Comfort, Fresh, Jif, Lux, Persil, Shield, Stergene, Sun, Surf, Whisk, Omo, Rinse, Biolumil, Drive, Huggy, Jif, Rinso, Softly, Solvol, Aid, Vim	UK/ Netherlands	25,674	Unknown	0	0	Yes but is phasing out	At least one subsidiary in SA (7,973)	33	Yes but none direct to political parties
Reckitt & Colman	Airwick, Brasso, Cherry Blossom, Cleen-O-Pine, Dettol, Gumption, Harpic, Meltonian, Mr Sheen, Oven Pad, Robin, Windolene	UK	2,091	Unknown	0	0	Yes but is phasing out	At least one subsidiary in SA (1,841)	20	Yes but none direct to political parties
Colgate - Palmolive	Ajax, Fresh, Halo, Palmolive, Softlan, Bio-Ad, Spree, Dynamo, Fab 2, Fab 3, Cuddly, Spray-N-Wipe, Kindness, Ultra Brite	US	4,428	4%+	2+	1+	Yes but is phasing out	At least one subsidiary in SA (671)	34	None in the US
Patersons Zochonis	1001 Range, Imperial Leather, Morning Fresh, Racasan	UK	285	Unknown	0	0	Yes	None	10	Yes but none direct to political parties
SC Johnson and Son	Brillo, Slade, Goddard's Klear, Living Wood, Pledge, Shake'N'Vac, Shout, Protector, Freedom, Johnson Wax	US	4,500	5%+	1+	1+	Yes but is phasing out	At least one subsidiary in SA (154)	20	None in the US



Best buys

Getting comprehensive information on alternative washing powders available in each of our readers' countries has proved difficult. However, the following powders appear to avoid at least some of the harmful ingredients listed opposite.

Aotearoa/New Zealand: The most eco-friendly washing powder available is a pure soap called Lux Flakes. Nutriclean and Amway products are both reportedly biodegradable. But if you want to be sure, Greenpeace and the Ministry for the Environment have produced booklets with recipes for making your own alternative cleaning liquids.

Australia: *Herbon* - available through some health foods shops in some states. *Ecover* - expected to be available by mid-1990. Products vary from state to state; details can be obtained by contacting the campaigning organizations listed in the action section, and through the Friends of the Earth household ecology guide.

Canada: Pure soaps like *Ivory* are phosphate free and *Ivory Snow* is also enzyme-free. *Loblaws* and *Miracle Foodmart* both make their own brands of 100-per-cent phosphate-free detergents. And the Canadian Green Consumer Guide offers a detailed list of recipes on how to make everything from washing powders to non-caustic drain openers, furniture polish and moth repellents.

United Kingdom: The vanguard in 'environment-friendly' washing powders is formed by *Ecover* and *Ark*, each of them produced by ethically sound 'alternative' companies of the same name. The only harmful ingredient these powders contain is bleach - but *Ecover* supplies this separately so that it is not used unnecessarily. Supermarket chains like Sainsbury's with *Greencare* are now beginning to follow their lead.

United States: Some well-known phosphate-free brands available in the US are *All-Temperature Cheer*, *Tide Liquid*, *Wisk* and *All*.

Simply...

NINE WAYS TO HELP SAVE THE PLANET

1. DISCOURAGE PACKAGING

NEXT time you are out shopping try this test; the less essential a product is, the more packaging it will have. Compare, for example, a box of chocolates with eight layers of wrapping, to a bag of rice with only one. Over-packaging adds about ten per cent to our weekly shopping bill. It serves no real purpose and eventually we have to pay for it to be taken away. It also uses up scarce resources; most plastic is made from oil and does not biodegrade. As a first step you might refuse the plastic bags that are thrust upon you at the supermarket check-out and use boxes to carry home the food.



2. AVOID POISONS

EVERY day there is another scare about some product damaging our health. The easiest poisons to avoid are those designated as such. Weedkillers and pesticides work their way up the food chain from plants, through insects and birds, into your family – which is a good reason to keep your garden organic. Bleaches are among the most polluting of household cleaners. As well as being a health risk, they carry on killing organisms in rivers long after they leave your home, so it is best to minimize the quantities used. The environment-friendly bleaches now on sale are better than ordinary bleaches since they contain no chlorine – but the substitute, hydrogen peroxide, may still be harmful.



3. SET STANDARDS

DON'T be satisfied with buying something because it is described as 'green'. You need to know exactly what you are getting. How will it affect the environment and you? What is it made from? You have the right to accurate, informative labeling of products so that you can make your own decisions about what to buy. That means lobbying governments, supermarkets and manufacturers. In West Germany shoppers look for a Blue Angel on the label before they purchase. Then they know that the item conforms to a given set of environmental standards. The scheme has recently been improved to include criteria for judging a product at all stages in its life, from how it was made, to its impact on the environment after it has been sold.



4. EAT LOCAL

TAKE one of your favourite cereals and count how many ingredients are listed on the packet. The more there are, the more wasteful its production process has been. The stabilizers, additives, colourings and flavourings in processed food are chemicals produced in factories. Most have no nutritional value and many are harmful to our health; they are included to increase the shelf-life and 'attractiveness' of the product. Likewise the pesticides and weedkillers used in large-scale crop-farming kill plants and wildlife and pollute the atmosphere. The residues accumulate in our bodies and can cause cancer and birth defects. Fresh food grown organically without using chemicals is better for your health. It also tends to be grown locally so that less fuel is wasted on transporting it. Organic food is still expensive – but the more we buy it, the cheaper and more widespread it will become.



6. SAVE ENERGY

THERE is no hazard-free way of producing large quantities of energy, so we have to conserve it. Insulating your loft, fitting double-glazing, making your doors draughtproof and switching off lights and fires when you don't need them save energy – and money too. You can save up to 30 per cent of your heating costs by fitting a time-clock and a thermostat to your boiler. Low-energy-using fridges and washing machines have recently appeared on the market and are cheaper to run than ordinary ones. Heat recycling pumps use little power themselves and improve heat distribution, reducing the amount of energy needed to heat the house. Best of all, you can fit your home with solar panels (see *Action*, Page 25) that will supply at least some of your heating needs.



5. PENALIZE POLLUTION

THE deadly pollution potential of many manufactured goods is now being recognized. But we can all do our bit to eliminate polluting products from the market. In a society dominated by consumerism, every buying choice we make is a political act – by choosing to buy environmentally friendly cleaning fluids and powders, avoiding aerosols and using unleaded fuel, we are not only minimizing our own impact on the environment but also registering a protest. This forces companies to see that there is a growing demand for genuinely 'green' goods. But we should also try to find out what kinds of pollution a product causes during its manufacturing process. Some items are harmless in themselves, but cause enormous environmental damage to make.

7. RECYCLE WASTE

WE produce more garbage today than ever before. Recycling is better than disposal so before you throw anything away think how you could give it a second life. Many supermarkets now have bottle-banks, but returnable bottles are better still because they save natural resources and energy – manufacturers need to be pressured into recognizing this. Old fridges and cookers should be taken to second-hand shops or civic-amenity sites to be refurbished instead of dumped. Organic household waste can be composted to make garden fertilizer. And many motorists are still unaware that used sump oil from do-it-yourself oil changes can be recycled if returned to garages.



8. RESEARCH RAW MATERIALS

IT is important to find out what raw materials a product uses. How were they mined and where did they come from? Did the table and chair in your home involve rainforest destruction? If they are made of mahogany, the answer is 'yes'. We should only buy woods that have sustainable sources, look first for furniture in second-hand shops, and give away old household items to be sold by charities. Aluminium cans are made from bauxite which is often dug up in tropical forests. They use the equivalent of half the can full of oil in their production. The recycling of these is well established in Australia, Canada and the US, all of which re-use more than 50 per cent. But in the UK more than 90 per cent of all aluminium cans are still thrown away – collect yours together and take them to a scrap-metal dealer.

9. PLANT TREES

EACH of us consumes the equivalent of between one or two trees each year in paper-use alone. The least we can do is plant a few trees

in return. Stick to native species to ensure the tree is suitable for the soil in your area. As well as being aesthetically pleasing, trees absorb carbon dioxide which is thought to be making holes in the ozone layer. They also harbour wildlife and help prevent soil erosion. They will be in place long after you have gone, like guardians of the future.



Passing the muck

Western countries are overflowing with dangerous waste – and their first thought is to dump it in the Third World. Nigerian journalist Elizabeth Obadina tells a dirty story.



Photo: Dorreboom/Greenpeace

Sludge squad: Greenpeace activists block the discharge of the Kemira fertilizer company.

UPROAR breaks out in Nigeria during 1988, when officials discover that an Italian ship has illegally dumped toxic waste at the small delta port of Koko. Nigeria threatens to execute toxic waste dumpers; it seizes an innocent Italian ship berthed in Lagos; it recalls the Nigerian ambassador from Rome and sends the Italian ambassador packing. Then it forces Italy to remove almost 4,000 tons of offending industrial wastes from Nigerian soil. Within six weeks, mountains of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polluted earth and other waste have been evacuated.

But the story is too big to be kept quiet. Media coverage generates public

outrage, if incomplete understanding. Villagers in Bendel State hide their television and radio sets on treetops because they fear that electronic equipment will transmit radioactivity.

Anger at the Nigerian Government is widespread. Nigeria has led African countries in banning the importation of waste from industrialized countries. This is on the grounds that there are no high-temperature incineration facilities in sub-Saharan Africa and no plans to build any. The country has used its position as Africa's Big Brother – one in four Africans is Nigerian – to lean on states wavering towards accepting foreign waste. Having campaigned from the moral

high ground, the Nigerian Government is acutely embarrassed to be caught throwing stones from a glass house.

When pressed by journalists for an assurance that Koko is Nigeria's only dump, the irritated Minister for Works and Housing snaps, 'I cannot confirm that Koko is the only dump. Only a fool would do that, Nigeria being what it is.'

What he means is that Nigeria is notoriously difficult to police. Corrupt border-officials collude with importers of dubious goods wanting to grease their way into the country. And corruption is condoned by powerful grandees in government and business. As one Nigerian journalist explains, most African leaders have their drinking water imported from Europe – so why should they bother about the danger that dumped waste might contaminate underground water?

There are also substantial financial attractions for a Third World country in becoming someone's dustbin. Guinea-Bissau stood to gain 600 million dollars – twice its foreign debt – when it agreed to bury 15 million tons of Philadelphia's municipal ash. It only cancelled the deal after the Organization of African Unity decided to increase action against dumping in 1988.

The West regularly sends shiploads of toxic waste to the Third World, and if countries decline to take it, the waste is frequently dumped anyway. For example

Disposing of toxic waste

Global problem

- A company called Global Industrial Complex Limited – which has representatives in New York and Dhaka – has proposed shipping millions of tons of toxic waste from Europe and the US to Bangladesh.

- The South African government has approved a project to build a plant capable of handling 500,000 tons of imported waste a year.

- The government of the Bahamas has tentatively approved a plan to allow a US company – Summit Cement and Development Corporation – to burn 88,000 tons of hazardous wastes on Grand Bahama Island.¹

Home solution

- The 3M company which makes floppy disks has saved around \$300 million over a decade by halving the waste it produces – boosting its net income by around five per cent.²

- The USS Chemicals company in Ironton, Ohio has been saving around \$100,000 in raw-material costs through reducing air emissions by 100,000 lbs per year.³

- Cutting waste also helps beat disposal costs – which is why the Borden Chemical Company in Fremont, California, reduced its toxic phenol wastes by 93 per cent.³

1 Greenpeace US, 1989. 2 Pollution Prevention Pays, MG Royston (Pergamon, 1979). 3 INFORM US report, 1985.

a ship called the *Felicia* left Philadelphia in August 1986 carrying a cargo of incinerator ash containing harmful metal residues. It drifted the globe for just over two years looking for a port to discharge the ash, and even changed its name to the *Pelicano* in an attempt to escape detection. Finally, weary of its enforced nomadism, it tipped its cargo overboard into the Indian Ocean. Industrial nations dump 20 billion tonnes of industrial waste into the Indian Ocean annually, according to the government of Madagascar.

In Nigeria however, the discovery of the Koko dump led to the setting up of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency – a new initiative in environment policing. To date this has acted against some of Nigeria's chief polluters – for example, it closed down a government-owned super-phosphate plant which was emitting dangerous levels of sulphur-dioxide.

But when it comes to the dumping of Western waste, Africa faces a problem. While Western and developing countries apparently agree that they should prevent the 'environmentally unsound disposal' of hazardous waste, there is no consensus

about what the term 'hazardous' means. Countries like Nigeria classify all waste as hazardous. But Western countries generally disagree. While Africa wants to prohibit totally the cross-border movement of wastes, the West seeks only to control it. Altogether 33 countries approved a draft treaty, drawn up at Basel last March, which called for the toxic waste trade to be regulated instead of for a total ban.

Third World countries are especially worried about the dumping of nuclear waste. So far the 'Dumpwatch' surveillance system, established in 1988 by the 16 members of the Economic Community of West African States, has limited this by implementing tough new anti-dumping laws – especially in Ghana, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire. The danger is that American and European dumpers will bypass these states and head for poorer countries, where the lure of enormous pay-offs in hard currency could prove irresistible. □

Elizabeth Obadina lives and works in Lagos.

WHAT

YOU

CAN DO

● **Use fewer chemicals.** Limit the numbers of domestic chemicals you buy – like bleaches, pesticides and weedkillers. Avoid buying foods packaged in non-biodegradable plastics and opt for recyclable containers. Where possible keep containers and use them again.

● **Join a campaigning organization.** The International Toxic Waste Action Network is a global coalition of environmental, consumer and other citizen groups, representing millions of people worldwide. Its aim is to end the international trade in toxic wastes, particularly the dumping of such wastes in Third World countries. It has called for a global convention outlawing all toxic waste trade schemes – and it needs your support. For more information about it contact Greenpeace (see *Action*, Page 6).

● **Work locally.** Find out what waste is being dumped near your home and campaign against it.

Harmony in abundance

What do Buddhism, ducks and human excreta have in common? Sue Robson discovers why China is the greenest country of them all.

IN southern China, every bit of land is used not once but three times. Rice grows in water. Fish swim in the water amid the rice. Ducks paddle on the water, above the rice and fish. Travelling around China I was continually amazed by the ingenuity with which the Chinese use and re-use every scrap of what we often dismiss as waste.

China has a fifth of the world's population, but only seven per cent of its arable land – mainly in the densely populated eastern strip. Although the land mass is huge – stretching from Korea to Pakistan, the USSR to Vietnam – only a small proportion of the land can be farmed, which is why over centuries the Chinese have become experts at using scarce resources. In a way they are the world's ultimate green consumers.

Take that paddy field, well stocked with fish, rice and ducks. The Chinese produce an extremely high yield, largely without recourse to chemicals since these are too expensive for most people. Instead, ducks catch pests before they attack the rice and their manure fertilizes the soil.

The central plains of China have been farmed continuously for thousands of years and you begin to wonder how they have stayed fertile. In the city, the reason becomes obvious. Waves of smell hit you as peasant women cycle past towing brown-encrusted oil drums filled with the precious produce of the city's latrines. Whereas we treat human excreta as something to be neutralized with chemicals and politely disposed of, the Chinese see it as one more resource. Outside

every field you find a home-made latrine, waiting for passing cyclists to contribute valuable fertilizer.

The conservation of scarce resources is a principle applied to everything. Plastic bags are just reaching China and are still too precious to be readily disposable. More usual is the reed basket, carefully woven by peasants for carrying all kinds of vegetable produce to market. Heavy plastic or hessian sacks are treasured and used repeatedly.

It is the same with bottles. There is a deposit on every jar and bottle, and people take their own to shops for refilling. The first time I bought a soft drink at a roadside stall



The ultimate pesticide – paddy-field ducks.

and began cycling away, I roused a despairing cry: the bottle was worth almost as much as the fizz inside it.

In the home too, conservation is meticulous. Chinese cooking uses far less energy than Western boiling, baking and roasting: cutting food into slivers means that

any dish is cooked in minutes. The cooking is especially economical in terms of meat. To make a multi-course banquet for six people, student friends brought round a piece of fatty meat about the size of a small steak – just enough to flavour the piles of cheap vegetables. Every part of an animal is used: chicken's feet, fish eyes, offal and fat are great delicacies. Vegetables that Westerners often feed to livestock – such as rape – make lovely dishes.

The average Chinese household is also much more energy-efficient than its Western counterpart. Rooms are smaller, windows are fitted with makeshift insulation, and any waste is burnt in the stove. In place of our large pieces of coal, the Chinese burn briquettes shaped from coal dust. Homes are generally colder than in the West, and student dormitories unheated: people habitually wear so many layers of clothing that they look almost round.

Chinese thrift is more from necessity than idealism; the world's concern about the hole in the ozone layer is bad news to the billion Chinese about to acquire a refrigerator per household.

But Chinese people do have an inbuilt respect for the natural balance of things. Notions of universal harmony are encoded in the religions of Daoism and Buddhism. And they are most apparent in traditional Chinese medicine, which uses non-chemical treatments like herbs, massage and acupuncture. Chinese doctors consider it incredible that Westerners release unknown side-effects on their children by feeding them drugs.

Traditional China is gentle with nature. And it is ironic that just as we are beginning to turn to it for answers to environmental questions, it has begun aspiring to Western ways.

Sue Robson has been working in China as an English teacher.

Prophets or clowns?

Back in January 1980 we made ten predictions about the decade ahead – and offered free resubscription forms to all readers if we scored less than five out of ten. We scraped home by the skin of our teeth.

Wisdom: We were right (and jubilantly so) that revolution in the Philippines would see off dictator Ferdinand Marcos. And our prediction that the USSR would be the most troubled nation of the 1980s was quite prescient – we said specifically in those pre-Gorbachev days that Poland would be the thin end of the wedge and that the resurgence of ethnic identity would cause a flashpoint, especially among Muslims.

Our prediction that multinationals would begin media campaigns to buy social and cultural acceptability seems accurate: in recent years the television screens have been full of corporations boasting about their bigness instead of concealing it, as they used to, behind their brand names. And our ideas about the energy crisis also seem to have been borne out – with enough new oil reserves discovered to allay fears of imminent exhaustion and with the nuclear energy debate becoming more and more an ideological issue.

But for our last point we had to rely on being half-right about two issues: we rightly predicted a Common Market between the US and Canada – but wrongly thought it would also include Mexico and Venezuela; and we predicted that unemployment would rise sharply in the West, causing more flexible working patterns – but were over-optimistic about the implications, seeing masses of people returning to school in middle life and then starting a new career.



Egg on face: We were wrong about there being a Canberra Watergate, with Australian politicians found to be corruptly involved with mining companies – still, it was a nice try. And we were also way off beam about unemployment being the greatest political force of the 1980s in the Third World – we predicted riots among the urban unemployed all over the world which simply haven't happened.

We were too pessimistic about manufacturing companies withdrawing from the Third World as automation in the West took over – in fact there is much more manufacturing in developing countries now than in 1980, as our next issue will make plain. And we were plain wrong that anarchism would be the most studied and talked-about movement of the 1980s – though maybe not so mistaken if you think that much Green philosophy is really anarchism by another name.

Dateline 2000

Imagine this is New Year's Day in the year 2000. The ageing NI team is looking back on the key events of the last decade of the millennium.



THE END OF APARTHEID

South Africa now has a black-led but mixed-race government. The effective unbanning of the African National Congress at the beginning of the decade gathered momentum very fast and the white minority was eventually forced to accept a

negotiated settlement not dissimilar to that arrived at in Zimbabwe. The new country rejected the new name Azania on the grounds that it had slave origins – and preferring the sense that it was a vital part of the continent as a whole. There are already signs that its great wealth and influence are beginning to regenerate the whole southern third of Africa, particularly the previously beleaguered states of Mozambique, Angola and Zambia. With luck this benign influence and economic motor could extend its benefits even deeper into the continent over the next decade.

CHINA FINDS ITS VOICE

China discovered its own road towards a more democratic version of socialism in the course of the 1990s. The democracy movement had been brutally suppressed in 1989 but idealism and popular opposition bubbled up again and found allies in the younger generation of Communist leaders that followed the death of Deng Xiaoping. Whereas in the 1980s the reforming emphasis was on market economics without political openness (perestroika without glasnost), the China of the mid-to-late 1990s was driv-



en by a concern for political openness for the first time in its history. The Dalai Lama returned to Tibet as China conceded significant autonomy – though Tibet remained a part of the People's Republic.

REVOLUTION IN EL SALVADOR



The 1990s was the decade which saw the victory of the FMLN guerillas in El Salvador. They finally ousted the vicious Arena regime, which had long

been backed by the US, ending a three-decade battle for social justice. The initial signs were that the new government would follow the lead of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in pursuing a mixed economy. President Jesse Jackson's reforming US administration offered encouragement rather than sending in the marines. Thus the Monroe Doctrine (according to which the US maintained Latin America as its legitimate 'sphere of influence') was as completely overturned as was Soviet control over Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Stop press: this was written before the FMLN attacked San Salvador.

LOVE AND PEACE REVISITED



The 1990s was the decade of idealism and optimism in the West. After the inflation and eventual recession of the 1970s and the greedy pursuit of money in the 1980s, people (especially the young) rediscovered some of the faith in the future and the enthusiasm for change which had characterized the 1960s. Longer hair made a comeback. But the renewed social concern benefitted from the lessons of the preceding decades by being more realistic – and so arguably achieving more. The across-the-board respect for green thinking had a lot to do with this change in atmosphere – so too did the disappearance of the 'Soviet threat'.

RISE OF THE PACIFIC

The 1990s saw Japan take over from the US as the world's dominant power. This was driven by economics and the yen, closely followed by the ecu or European Currency Unit, displaced the dollar as the world's most important currency. But Japan also began to play a major foreign policy role, gaining great influence in

the UN, the World Bank – and in the Third World, by virtue of its being the largest aid-giver. The Pacific Basin became the world's key trading arena – and as a result the world was forced to take much more notice of Pacific Island groupings such as Micronesia that had barely made the global news since World War Two.

THE UN BOUNCES BACK

The worldwide acceptance of the need for supranational controls on the environment – given that the holes in the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and tropical deforestation affect the whole planet rather than individual countries – has lent new respect and strength to the United Nations. And the greater integration of individual countries into trading blocs (Europe, North America, Southern Africa, Latin America) has made gen-



tle progress towards some form of global administration (rather than government) seem more natural and inevitable.

AIDS UNCONQUERED

The spread of the HIV virus has continued on a massive scale throughout the decade, to the point where of a global depopulation of Black Death proportions seem more plausible. There is still no vaccine to immunize people against the virus. But at least drugs stopping the development of full-blown AIDS have kept down

the death toll in the West. In the Third World, where these drugs are too costly, the tragedy has continued unabated. Is it any coincidence that pharmaceutical companies have found medicines (which we have to keep taking and paying for) rather than a vaccine (which we would only have to take once)?

THE EUROPEAN THIRD WORLD



Europe started the decade in a mood of great self-confidence as the barriers between East and West came down. But the economic implications of the change soon came home to

roost. Outmoded smokestack industries in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were shattered by competition from the affluent West. Huge unemployment resulted and East Europeans began to wonder if they had not been better off in economic isolation – though there was no going back on political reform. The West began to see aid to Eastern Europe as more important than aid to the Third World – 'charity begins at home'. Yet again Africa proved to be the major loser.

TWO THIRD WORLDS

The term 'Third World' came to seem rather outmoded as developing countries divided into many different characters and degrees of prosperity. More of them got in on the industrial act – Sri Lanka was the latest brave new industrializing country, while India finally took off as a major supplier of iron and steel on the global stage. And those countries already in on the act surged ahead – notably South Korea, which moved into the



top ten richest countries in the world. Meanwhile the poorest nations of all were left even further behind as an effective 'fourth world'.

BRIEFLY...

- There was a major scandal in a French-speaking West African nation, involving the dumping of toxic waste by a Western waste-disposal company. The illegal payment was traced to the President's Swiss bank account. He has since gone into retirement in Martinique.
- Islamic fundamentalism continued to grow as a response to Western colonialization of their cultures – and led to governments which fiercely discriminated against

non-Muslims. It became a major influence not only in Iran, Egypt and Pakistan but also in Malaysia and Indonesia.

- The rise and rise of the automobile in the West was finally checked as governments of all political colours were forced to take action against traffic standstill and pollution. City centres became public-transportation-only zones while car taxes and road tolls rose sharply. Trains and trams made a big comeback.



OVERSEAS AID

Australian anxieties

Australia's decision to unfreeze its aid to Myanmar (Burma) — breaking ranks with other donors still boycotting the regime — was so strongly criticized by the opposition within the country that Canberra changed its mind. Australian technical advisers will now be withdrawn from a dairy project in Mandalay. The dairy will be handed over to the Myanmar Government, which in turn will sell it to private interests. The most probable buyer is understood to be that well-known Swiss food company, Nestlé.

From *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 146 No. 43 1989

TRIBAL PEOPLES

Action works

Now for the good news. Following a campaign by Survival International and other environmental organizations, the Scott Paper Company (makers of Andrex and Scottie tissues) has pulled out of a project in the tropical forests of western New Guinea, Indonesia. The project would have destroyed the livelihoods of 15,000 indigenous people and levelled an area of natural rain forest half the size of Wales.

The planned \$60 million project would have clear-felled 850,000 hectares of natural forest to make way for a eucalyptus wood-chip and pulping plant. The Indonesian Government had seen the project as spearheading a much wider regional development programme that would have radically changed much of the local environment and peoples' way of life.

A Scott Paper Company spokesperson commented that it felt there was no longer such a demand for eucalyptus. Instead the company would be using more recycled pulp and high yield fibre. The production of this pulp is ecologically more sound as processing methods are mechanical rather than chemical.

From *Survival International*, 310 Edgware Road, London W2 1DY UK

AGRICULTURE

Down on funny farm

Some European farmers cultivate their subsidies more profitably than the land — and even then their lobbying groups claim the returns are not enough. European Community subsidies alone contribute to producers £260 (\$400) a ton on beef and £841 (\$1,350) a ton on sheepmeat; that's about 12p and 40p per lb. respectively.

Imagine, points out The Vegetarian Society in its press release *The Economics of Food*, how sales of meat would suffer if these subsidies were taken off and prices rose accordingly.

Disastrous Community policies and the intervention system have pushed up the annual support for beef to £1,500 million (\$2,400 million). It would have been cheaper to dispose of this beef mountain by dumping it in the much-polluted North Sea. But this was averted by sales to Communist countries at embarrassingly low prices and with free transport to the export destinations. Poland and the USSR were paying as little as £400 (\$640) a ton — that's just 18p (29¢) per lb.

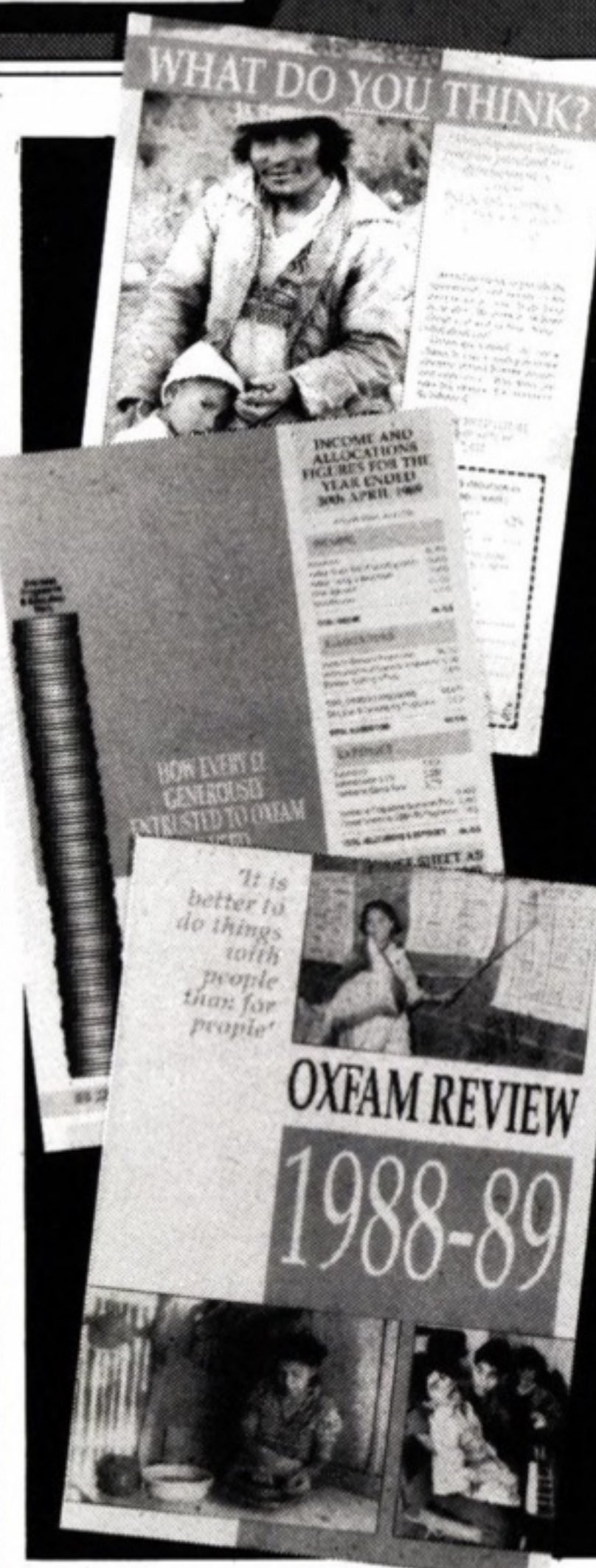
From *The Vegetarian Society*, Parkdale, Dunham Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4QG, UK

EDUCATION

Where in the world?

- Almost half of all high-school seniors in Baltimore, Maryland could not locate the United States on a world map
- More than 95 per cent of American college freshers tested could not locate Vietnam on a world map
- In response to a nationwide survey, 75 per cent of Americans could not locate El Salvador on a map
- The names of the two nations involved in SALT talks (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) could not be named by 63 per cent of Americans.

From *Facts: Global Illiteracy USA*. Available from Office on Global Education, National Council of Churches, 2115 N Charles St, Baltimore, MD 21218-5755, USA



WORLD HEALTH

Lest we forget

Sobering facts just released from the World Health Organization include:

- One billion people, or 20 per cent of the world's population, are diseased, in poor health or malnourished
- The greatest health problems are in sub-Saharan Africa where 160 million or 30 per cent of people are ill and undernourished
- In South and Central America, 90 million or 25 per cent of people are ill
- In North Africa and the Middle East — including Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq and Yemen — 90 million or 25 per cent of people are ill.

Health spending in the poorest countries averages less than five dollars per head per year. This compares with North America, Japan, Australasia and Western Europe, where spending averages \$400 per head.

About 2.8 million children die annually from vaccine-preventable diseases polio, tetanus, measles, diphtheria, pertussis and tuberculosis — and another three million are disabled. It costs about \$10 per child to vaccinate against the six diseases.

From *WHO Features*, No. 136, 1989

Thank you Oxfam

The Oxfam UK Annual Review for 1988/89 has some figures to be proud of. Income was a dramatic £66.7 million (\$105 million), 28 per cent up on the previous year, itself a record.

The financial achievement was done this year without Lloyds Bank sponsoring the Annual Review. NI readers with long memories may recall our editorial unhappiness (*NI* 190, page 29) with Oxfam taking £10,000 of Lloyds Bank money to advertise the familiar black horse on their 1987/88 Annual Review. At the same time the same bank was active in clamouring for repayment of £3,253 million (\$5,367 million) from Latin America, one of the continents where Oxfam is so active. We appealed to you to write to Oxfam about this particular issue. Perhaps your letters helped change minds. Thank you, Oxfam.

WOMEN

India's neglect

A study of gynaecological and sexual diseases conducted in two Indian villages found that 83 per cent of women suffered from iron-deficiency anaemia and 58 per cent had Vitamin A deficiency. A more unexpected finding in a supposedly traditional Hindu society was that nearly half the unmarried girls had had sexual intercourse.

Further findings: 92 per cent of all women surveyed had one or more gynaecological diseases, each woman suffering on average from 3.6 complaints. Half the diseases consisted of infections such as pelvic inflammatory disease and vaginitis.

The educational opportunities for India's women is little better than the health facilities provided for them; for their literacy rate is half that of men.

From *The Lancet*, January 14, 1989

"endquote"

'Before you finish eating breakfast this morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured ... We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality.'

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Killing the soul

Courage or bravado? The difference is vital as Margaret St Clare discovers when riding with an armed convoy through war-torn Mozambique.

I REALLY wasn't looking for trouble, or even adventure. Two teacher friends in Malawi had asked me if I'd visit Zimbabwe with them. Since I had worked in the country for four years and had friends there, I could not think of a better place to spend Christmas.

My teacher friends had air-tickets. I could only afford to go by road. From Blantyre in Malawi to the Zimbabwean capital Harare is a straight 400 miles. But for part of the journey you have to join an armed convoy as the road cuts through Tete province — a part of Mozambique where MNR guerrilla attacks sometimes occur. I tried not to think too much about it until one morning at 5.30, I was there at the border looking for a ride.

At Mwanza border post, a young Zimbabwean commander OK'd my lift with a Dutch couple, Anneke and Franz. He told us: 'We think that you will have a good journey to Tete. But this route is very unpredictable'. I asked him whether it was getting worse or better. 'Better, definitely,' he said.

So we set off: first the armoured vehicle, then three private cars, followed by about 60 trucks. The procession was punctuated by two more armoured vehicles.

Franz, Anneke and I were in one of the cars behind the first armored vehicle, which carried about 20 soldiers. When they slowed down, we slowed down; when they swerved round a pothole so did we. These are places where land-mines can be hidden. Nobody said much. As we drove through villages and settlements I was astonished by every calm child's or adult's face. How must it be to live in such insecurity, not knowing when or whence the next attack may come?

Then the bush closed in on the road. I began to think how easy it would be to creep up though the trees and ... Then there was a thud. The soldiers waved us to stop and opened fire into the trees on our right. *Zip - zip - zip*, spitting jets of yellow flame, then *rattattattatt* and a hail of light. I thought: 'Don't do that, you'll hurt somebody' and then just sat, very still and sad. Now four or five of the boys jumped down off the armored car and walked calmly, normally, across the road shoot-

ing, and disappeared into the bush still shooting. Another round of mortar fire exploded behind us. We all three sat, dead still. But the car drivers in front and behind us — all of them white men — *got out* of their vehicles and walked around, stretching their legs as if they were in a game park and *they* weren't afraid of the rhinos. An American-sounding voice yelled from behind: 'Those Zimbabwean guys are right on top of it. The Mozambicans would have run in the opposite direction'.

This piece of shit-scared macho bravado turned my stomach. What I had felt as I watched the soldiers get down off the car and walk into the trees, firing, firing, was gratitude, sadness, love. Intimate feelings, not comic-strip heroism at all. I felt like their mother — anxious, protective, but awed by their courage.

After perhaps 10 or 15 minutes it was over and we continued to Tete, a sun-bleached shanty-town spread around the Zambesi river. There we took on board a young American traveller called Rick. He had been hiding under a sack of potatoes during the firing and was the only man in the three cars who admitted he was scared. Even Franz later said he had thought it was all a joke, a kind of show put on for us by the soldiers. Perhaps he couldn't relate to the loose natural movements of the Zimbabwean soldiers, couldn't take them seriously. No sergeant major screaming, no drama, no tough guys — just people, and a job to be done to preserve life.

Whatever the reasons for their failure, I found the inability of these men to face the truth of what was happening humbly and seriously the most disturbing feature of the whole episode and, in a sense, more life-threatening than being attacked by invisible forces. Responding to mortal danger by trivializing and denying your feelings seems to me the ultimate form of alienation — that is death of the soul. It is a very dangerous state for our Western culture to be in: dangerous to ourselves, but also to everyone else. We deal in violence as news, entertainment and macho power play — from comic books in primary school through to propping up dictatorships or romanticizing liberation struggles. But somehow, as a culture, we cannot feel the human, emotional reality of such violent situations.

I have never heard a Zimbabwean speak in a glorifying, or pragmatic, or joking way, about war — and this country is full of what we would call heroes. So here is a riddle: are we whites (especially white men) so dangerous, cruel and callous as a globally dominant culture because we are so detached, so alienated from our own actions and feelings? Or is it the other way round? Or are the two perhaps inseparable?

Margaret St. Clare is living and working in Malawi.

© I think.





Wrestling with apartheid: Zakes Mokae and Donald Sutherland.



A Dry White Season

directed by Euzhan Palcy

This is cinema's best attempt yet to come to terms with South Africa. *A World Apart* was brilliant in its way but tightly focussed on a white mother and daughter; *Cry Freedom's* black scenes were much less convincing than its white, and it descended into an adventure yarn; while *Mapantsula* offered a portrait of a gangster without attempting to seize the big picture.

Like *Cry Freedom*, *A Dry White Season* shows a comfortable white middle-aged man gradually waking up to the vicious inhumanity of the apartheid system. But it is altogether more rooted in the bitter experience of black people. As the story unfolds in the immediate aftermath of the 1976 Soweto Uprising, we see how two families, one black and one white, are destroyed — and the black actors are all South Africans themselves rather than US imports.

For this we have to thank director Euzhan Palcy, since



Euzhan Palcy: breakthrough.

André Brink's original novel focusses almost entirely on the Afrikaner teacher, Benjamin du Toit. Palcy is the first black woman to make it as a big-budget director in Hollywood. This is only her second film. Her first, *Rue Cases Nègres*, was a stunning portrait of life in the sugar plantations of her native Martinique (and would have been hard to beat as *NI's* Film of the Year for 1983 if we'd chosen one then).

Snapped up for her obvious talent by Hollywood, Palcy held fast to her idea of making a movie about South Africa. Her concession to the industry was to structure the story as a mild thriller, showing du Toit (an outstanding performance by Donald Sutherland, his best for years) delving ever deeper into the treatment of his black gardener's family by the security forces. But the thriller element does no damage to the message and helps the story along for even the most committed viewer.

Another borrowing from mainstream is the courtroom scene at the centre of the film, which is carried by a virtuoso cameo from Marlon Brando as a wheezy, old and vastly corpulent liberal lawyer. This is Brando's first film since 1980 and it's good that his old campaigning fire was still sufficiently alight under the millions and the sloth to involve him in this.

A Dry White Season is all that we could ask of a Hollywood movie about South Africa. It leads the unconverted and naive step by step into understanding — and then stares the brutality of apartheid straight in the face.

Politics ★★★★★
Entertainment ★★★★★

A Dry White Season

*it is a dry white season
dark leaves don't last, their
brief lives dry out
and with a broken heart they
dive down gently headed for the
earth
not even bleeding.*

*it is a dry white season brother,
only the trees know the pain as
they still stand erect
dry like steel, their branches dry
like wire,*

*indeed, it is a dry white season
but seasons come to pass*

by Mongane Wally Serote,
one of black South Africa's
greatest poets.

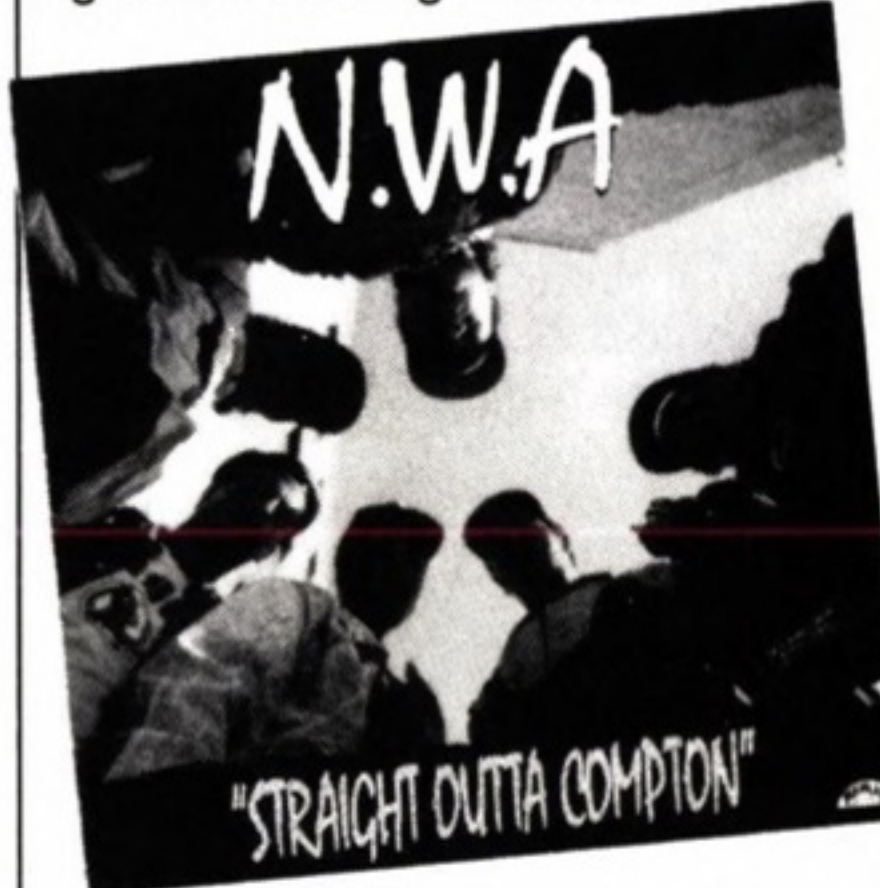


Straight Outta Compton

by Niggers With Attitude
(Priority/4th & Broadway)

Perhaps you've never heard NWA, but you've almost certainly heard of them. This black hip hop crew, with their incendiary, backs-to-the-wall rhetoric (eg *Fuck the Police*) are surrounded by moral panic. And it's not just the moral majority, or upwardly mobile blacks, who'll be offended. NWA simply epitomize the problems that much hip hop poses for thinking pop fans and the serious press as well: the machismo, misogyny and zero-dimensional music are an affront to all 'caring' pop's values.

The press have two strategies for dealing with this affront.



Either play up the 'positive' aspect (scratch most rap hoodlums and you'll find obligingly civic-minded, church-going, Bill Cosby-admiring moralists); or simply deny the music's dangerous allure by rejecting it as 'moronic' and 'boring'. But we should be trying to see how it both offends and appeals.

Hip hop is survivalist music. Today the black ghetto speaks for everybody's experience: the city's no longer a place of opportunity but a 'hell' to be survived. Hip hop is the sound of threatened individuals asserting themselves against an uncaring

world, taking on all comers and dispensing rough (social) justice or vengeance. Hence NWA's fascination with gangs and gun law (their favourite word is 'ruthless').

But survivalism also demands that men conquer inner weaknesses, harden themselves against feeling and femininity — NWA, for example, see all women as harpies and exploiters, and prefer sadistic/anal/oral sex to anything more involving. This priapic, will-to-survival music can allow men an unsettling glimpse into the impoverished, tunnel-vision world of their own (usually safely repressed) masculinity.

NWA, though, aren't hard-edged or moronic enough to convey the horror of survivalism. Apart from the white-cold rage, colossal bass recoil and steel-on-steel impacts of *Dopeman*, you get just warmed-over sampling, flippy-floppy beats and rather beer-bellied delinquency. Hip hop can be an excursion into your own dark side. But NWA are all 'attitude' and shock value — big sales and little else.

Politics ★
Entertainment ★



The Midas Touch

by Anthony Sampson
(Hodder & Stoughton)

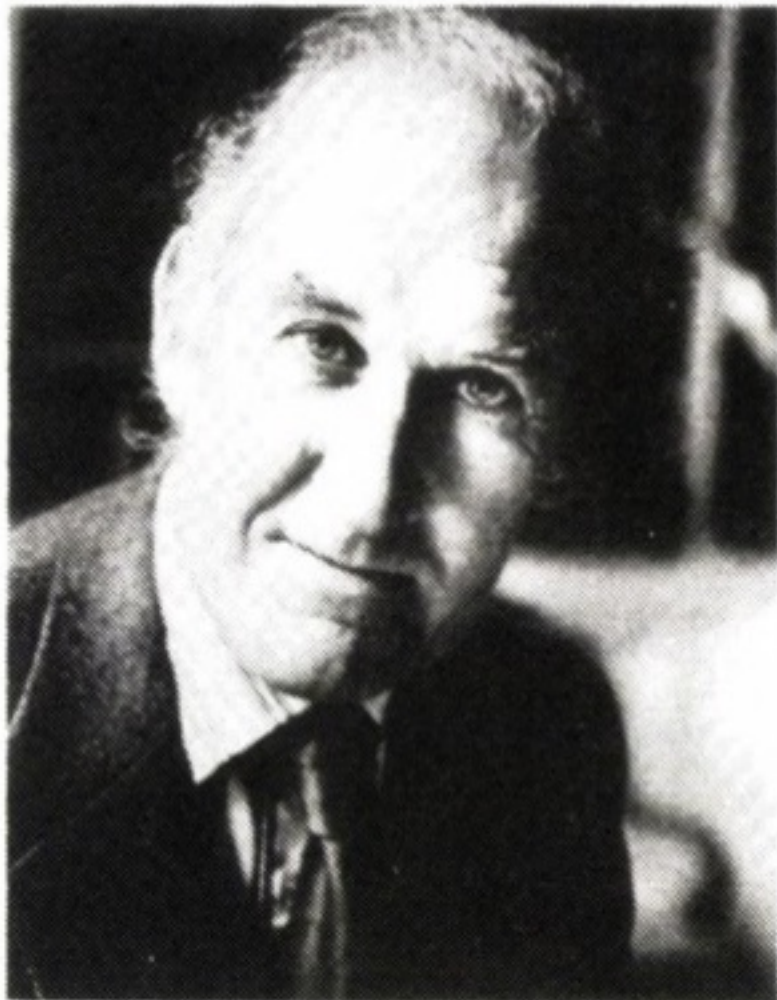
This is about 'Money, People and Power from West to East', as the subtitle to the book explains. It looks at the explosion of mobile, global money in the 1980s encouraged by the electronics communications revolution, and how it affects people's lives.

Fears in the 1970s — shared by the *NI* — of multinational corporations developing into international, all-powerful giants with loyalty to no country, now appear dated. Many of the top new corporations in the world are Japanese. They are firmly loyal to their country and government. Others like Chevron have been gobbled up, still others pushed to near-bankruptcy like Texaco. Even now British American Tobacco is desperately trying to fight off the predatory raid of James Goldsmith, Rothschild et al. The declared aim of such finance pirates is to break up the giants, and sell them off bit by bit. For the 1980s and 1990s, it is finance, not the corporation which is king.

We are given a narrow slice of history: the last ten years, complete with corporate raiders, the rise of the Japanese, the

1987 stock market crash, China, the East Asian economic miracle — together with an uncomfortably slight bow to the debt-ridden nations of Africa and Latin America.

But Sampson fails to explore seriously the catastrophic drop in commodity prices which fuelled the 'junk money' boom. The book's slim nature — it lacks



A lesson: Anthony Sampson.

the rich research which illuminated *The Arms Bazaar* or *The Sovereign State of ITT* — is also a disappointment.

Sampson's usual strengths and weaknesses are on display. He chooses to investigate the big issues. His writing is a joy, combining the telling quote from finance megastars with anecdote to illustrate a substantial point. And the complexities of economics are clearly and entertainingly explained. It's an object lesson for all feature writers. On the debit side, he frustratingly falls short of any overarching analysis. Here is the social democrat refusing to condemn the absurdities he chronicles so well; or simply producing half-baked observations. Humans, we are told, never tolerate for long the predatory and revolutionary power of money without constraining it. Really?

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Agents of Repression

by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall (*South End*)

Paramilitary police operations and death squads directed

against dissidents are usually associated with Third World regimes. This book documents the use of these, and other repressive techniques, in the secret war that the US FBI waged against the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Black Panthers during the 1960s and 1970s.

By 1971, when the official counter-subversion program COINTELPRO was 'ended', the wide range of tactics used — including assassination — had succeeded in destroying the Black Panthers and other militant Black groups.

But the secret war, increasingly against AIM, continued under other names and even intensified under FBI direction. In 1973, the US Army engaged in its first domestic operation since the Civil War when its forces, including armored cars, assisted heavily armed FBI agents in laying siege to the village of Wounded Knee. This had been occupied by AIM members in support of the Lakota (Sioux).

But Wounded Knee was not the end of the war against the

Lakota. Between 1973 and 1976, 69 AIM members and supporters died violently and 300 more were physically assaulted, sometimes shot. The political murder rate, attributed primarily to the tribal police, was almost equivalent to that of Chile in the three years after the coup against Allende.

The authors end their book by calling on the US Left to start seriously organizing against the FBI and the apparatus of political repression that continues to operate in the US. Given the increasing dissent in the US and recent revelations concerning new illicit actions against activists, it seems like good advice indeed.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

★ STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

CLASSIC

The Innocent Anthropologist

... being the book that demystified the study of other cultures

THESE 'Notes from a Mud Hut' very nearly failed to survive at all. Under siege from termites, goats, mice, rainstorms and — on a final stopover in Rome — thieves, the precious pieces of paper were only a little more vulnerable than the author himself.

Nigel Barley's book is partly about being human within an academic context he sees as largely hypocritical about fieldwork. 'The conventional myth seeks to depict the battle-scarred anthropologist as a lone figure wandering into a village, settling in and "picking up the language" in a couple of months; at the most, we may find references to translators being dispensed with after a few weeks. Never mind that this is contrary to all known linguistic experience.'

His own experience of a year living with the Dwayo people in Cameroon is told differently. He was faced there with one of the world's many tonal languages — conveniently forgotten in Western schools which teach only European languages and imply that all languages work in much the same way. One of Barley's more crashing mistakes occurs on his first meeting with the rainmaker. "Excuse me," I said, "I am cooking some meat." At least that was what I had intended to say; owing to a tonal error I declared to an astonished audience "Excuse me. I am copulating with the blacksmith."

Barley's savage wit ranges over bureaucrats, police, customs officials, Dwayos, Americans, Germans, French — and his own British. 'My immediate family knew only that I was mad enough to go to savage (sic) lands where I would live in the jungle, menaced by lions and snakes, and might be lucky to escape the cooking pot. It came as some comfort to me when I was about to leave Dwayoland that the chief of my village said that he would gladly accompany me back to my English village but that he feared a country where it was always cold, where there were savage beasts like the European dogs at the mission, and where it was known there were cannibals.'

What does it take to begin to understand and respect the ways of a culture so different from one's own? Without the benefit of continuous

interpretation and hindsight, much of the world of this book would be as incomprehensible to the reader as it was initially to its innocent anthropologist. Elderly men clammed up when Barley asked questions in the presence of his assistant, who was felt to be too young; men rushed howling from the room when he casually asked about circumcision in a sister's presence.

'To begin with I was distressed to find that I couldn't extract more than 10 words from Dwayos at a stretch ... One day, after about two months of fairly fruitless endeavour, the reason struck me. Quite simply, Dwayos have totally different rules about how to divide up the parts of a conversation. One must talk to people physically present as if on the telephone, where frequent interjections and verbal responses must be given if only to assure the other party that one is still paying attention. When listening to someone talking, a Dwayo stares gravely at the floor, rocks backwards and forwards and murmurs "Yes", "It is so", "Good" every five seconds or so. Failure to do so leads to the speaker rapidly drying up. As soon as I adopted this expedient, my interviews were quite transformed.'

Barley was useful to the villagers as a source of transport, of money and of continual amusement through his language-learning efforts and his uncomprehending questioning. Only occasionally did villagers become impatient, thinking he was only pretending not to understand — they believed he was an ancestor in a white skin who was obsessed with privacy simply to maintain his secret.

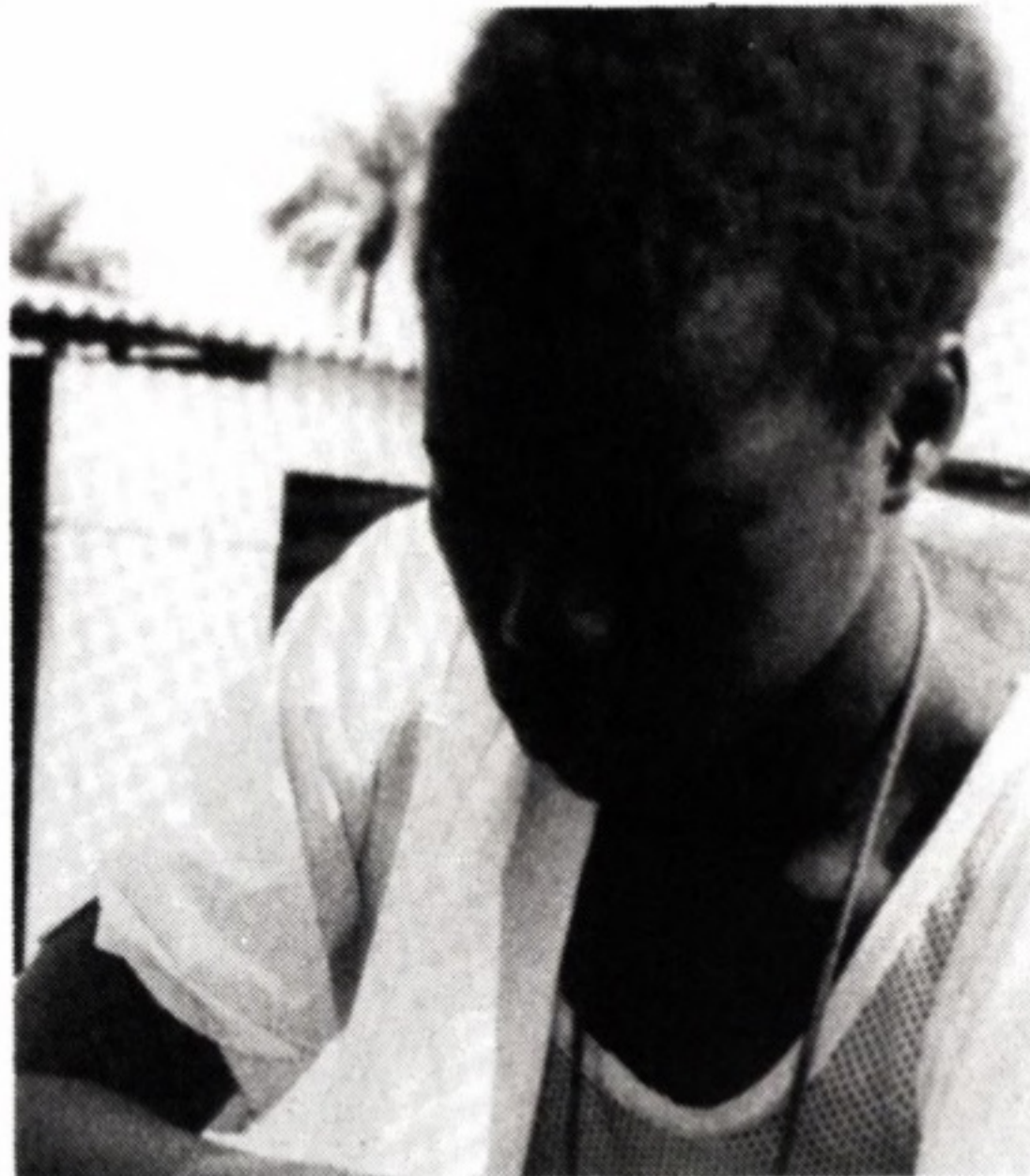
At other times, converse sets of taboos could be quite useful. Barley was not terrified of 'that most horrible of birds, the owl', would pick up 'a chameleon, whose bite is held to be deadly', and handled the claws of an ant-eater, believed to be potentially lethal. Yet when a scorpion rushed straight at him, he ran out of his hut to cry to a six-year-old child outside 'There are hot beasts within!' 'The child peered inside and with an expression of profound disdain stamped the scorpions to death with his bare feet.'

The Innocent Anthropologist manages to value the culture and symbolism of the Dwayos while respecting the needs created by the author's own background. In a book that returns time and again to the issue of cultural hypocrisy, the most biting satire is saved for those whose years in Cameroon teach them nothing. Between the jokes, the discomforts and the anthropological unravellings, Barley conducts an unrelenting war on cultural complacency and self-satisfaction.

Carol Fewster

The Innocent Anthropologist by Nigel Barley (available in Penguin).

Cape Verde



Leader President Aristides Maria Pereira

Economy GNP per capita \$500 (US \$18,530)

Currency: Cape Verde Escudo (C V Esc)

Exports are fresh and frozen fish, livestock produce, vegetables, coffee, salt and entrepôt trade. Efforts are being made to develop industrial services such as ship-repair, cargo carriage and weather surveillance.

Imports are rice, wheat and maize/corn with some fuel, machinery and textiles also.

Most people are small farmers or peasants and face recurrent drought and soil erosion. Land reform is being implemented and main food crops are maize/corn, beans, bananas, sweet potatoes and groundnuts. Fishing (shellfish and tuna) is growing.

People 344,000

Health Infant mortality figures not available, but improvements have been made since independence.

Culture The Portuguese brought Africans to Cape Verde in the fifteenth century to work as slaves. Nowadays many Cape Verdeans live in the US, Holland, Portugal and Senegal with a few in the UK.

Religion: Catholic and some traditional African religions.

Language: Portuguese and Creole

FABLED in antiquity as the Islands of the Hesperides or Islands of the Blessed, the Cape Verde Islands won independence in 1975 from Portugal, which had colonized them since 1462. But if the Ancients had thought of them as the Islands of the Blessed, the reality emerging in 1975 proved very different.

Scenically splendid with volcanic peaks, the islands lie about 400 miles to the west of Africa's western bulge. The people, brought as slaves from the mainland, had known centuries of hunger and despair. Slavery ended in the nineteenth century but forced labour and an acute racist persecution took its place. These ensured destitution and in 1975, when the Portuguese empire crashed, a seven-year drought looked ready to guarantee calamity. Food supplies were very short. Half the labour force was unemployed. Health and modern education services were practically non-existent. No structures of self-rule, even the most primitive, had been allowed to develop.

'Our people had lost the belief that their country could be of use to them,' recalled President Aristides Pereira. He and some 90 veterans of the anti-colonial struggle on the mainland, in Cape Verde's sibling colony of Guiné (Guinea-Bissau), had come home in 1975 to lead the struggle for a new life. 'But we came back to a society which had fallen apart. We came back to disaster.'

The story since then has been anything but disastrous. The people have shown that warm and vivid hope can be made to grow out of despair. They have done this by means of an ingenious and dogged application of the principles of *participação popular* or people's participation. Their leader, Amílcar Cabral, who was assassinated by Portuguese agents in 1973, showed how to win the liberation war and at the same time build the foundations for self-government.

The result today is that Cape Verde not only governs itself by a national people's assembly elected by universal adult suffrage, but also possesses a dense network of local councils, supplemented by participatory organizations, to settle the details of everyday life. People's power is a reality.

Material results accompany this building of participatory politics. In these practically treeless islands, voluntary effort has enabled the planting of some 15 million drought-resistant trees. Foreign aid has been used to increase and ensure fresh-water supplies.

Large problems remain but at least no-one here dies of hunger. In the style of Cabral, this is a regime of prudent and realistic temperament. The visitor will not find 'triumphalism' but a careful claim to have at least begun the difficult climb to national viability.

Basil Davidson

At a glance

***** Excellent
 **** Good
 *** Fair
 ** Poor
 * Appalling

INCOME DISTRIBUTION



High on the government agenda

SELF-RELIANCE

**



Slowly improving

POSITION OF WOMEN



Generally good

POLITICS



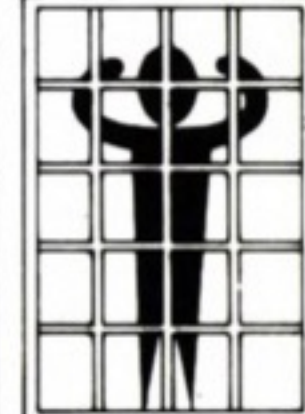
Marxist-oriented democracy with African overlay

LITERACY



Improving

FREEDOM



People's power pervades

LIFE EXPECTANCY



At 65 years, one of the highest in Africa. (US 75 years)

AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM NEW INTERNATIONALIST TO ITS READERS

ARE YOU BACKING A RETURN TO THE KILLING FIELDS?



IN THE 1970s more than one million Cambodians died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot. Now Pol Pot is poised to return to power. You might expect the governments of democratic countries to be horrified by this prospect; but no.

Most Western governments are actually **helping** Pol Pot by giving diplomatic support to the Khmer Rouge-dominated coalition at the United Nations (UN Resolution 44/22 passed on 16 November, 1989). That is not all. The United Nations feeds Khmer Rouge soldiers in the refugee camps they use as bases. And the British SAS has helped train troops fighting alongside the Khmer Rouge.

What is going on?

Ask the question! And demand change!

What is Britain doing to prevent Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge returning to power?



Don't be fobbed off by meaningless answers from politicians. If you do not get a satisfactory answer **ask and ask again** until you do. You can also contact **Oxfam UK (274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ)** and get their **Cambodia latest news** which will give you background information on the situation.

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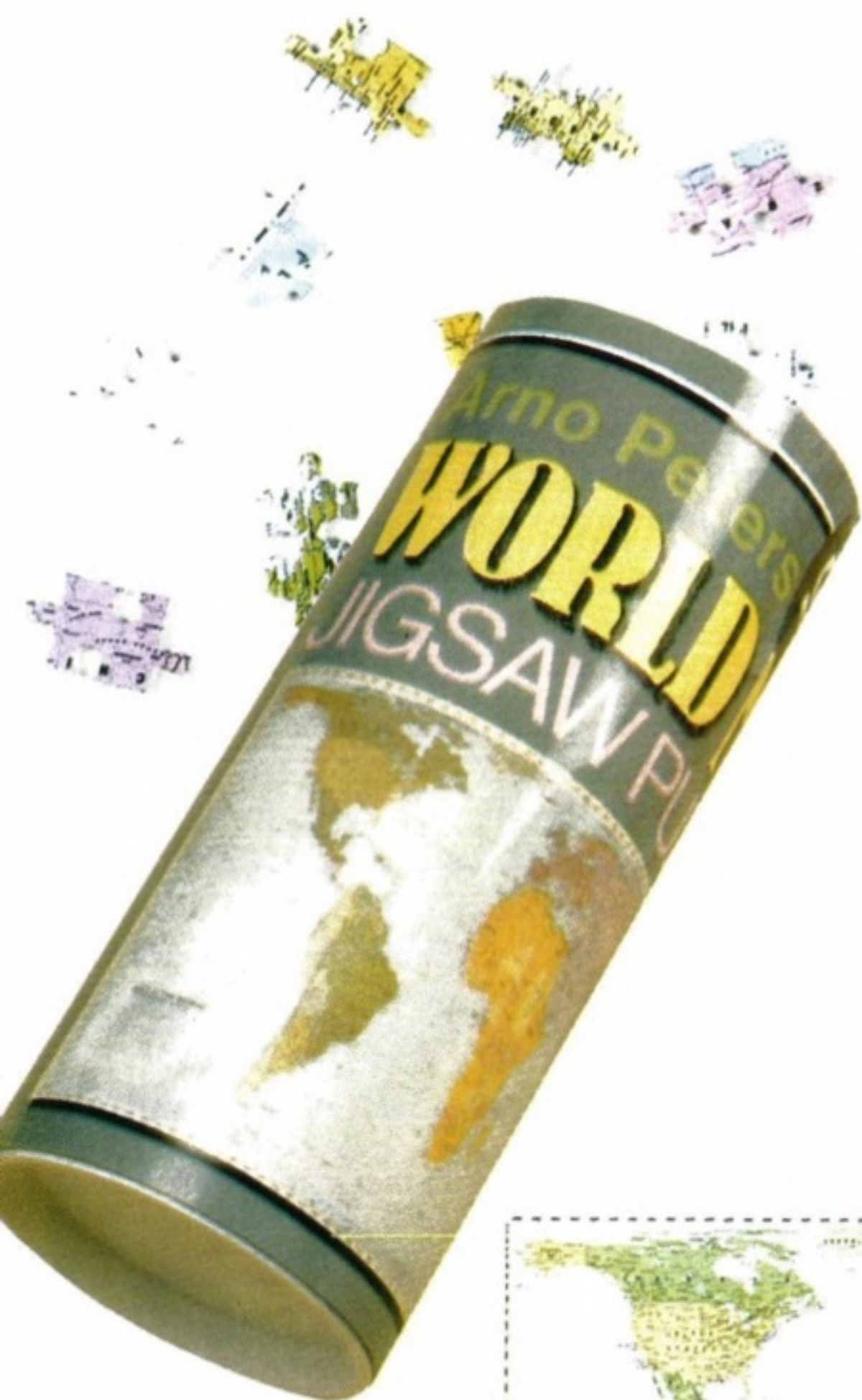
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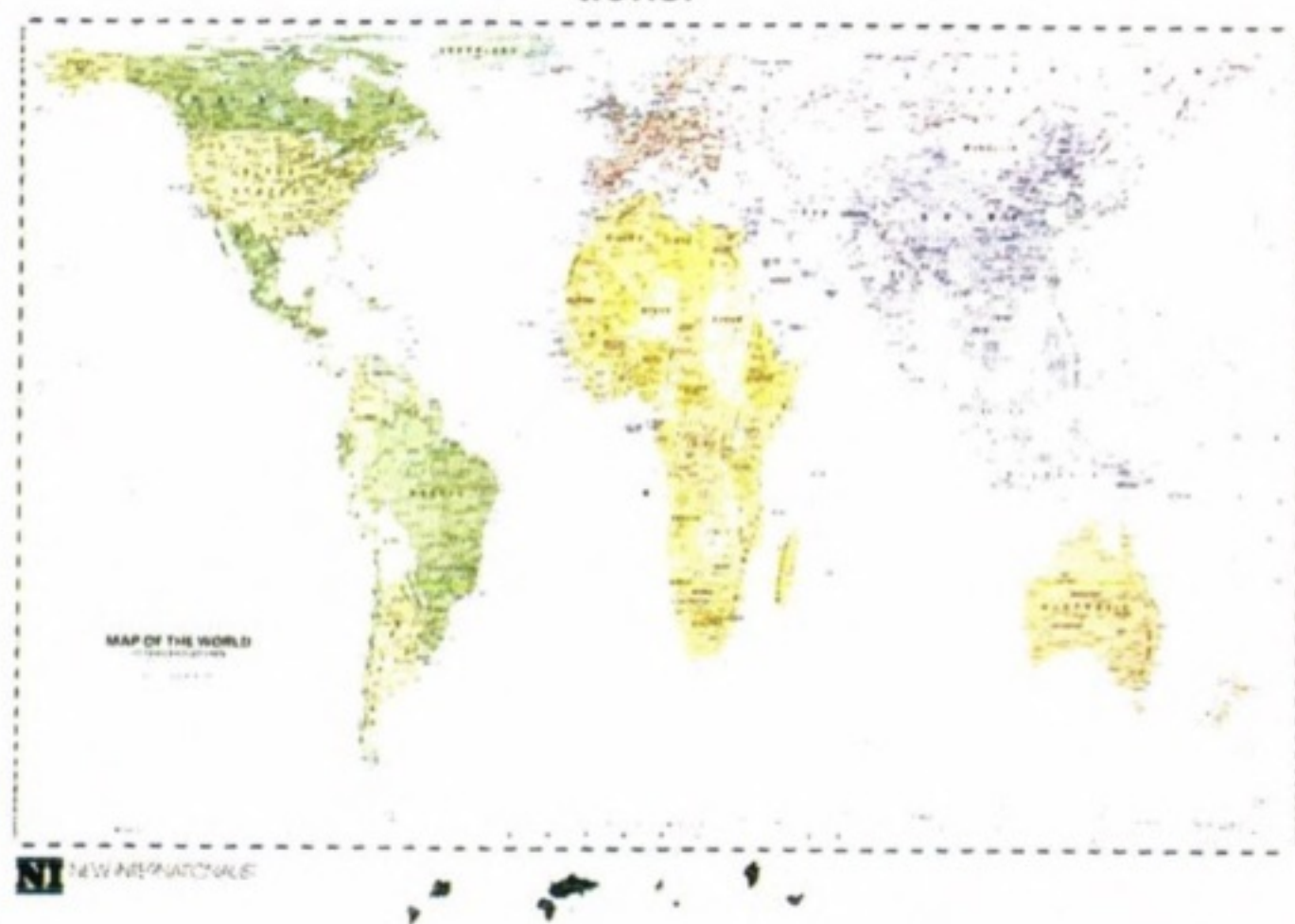
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